Today's
The Herald-Palladium
included inside

Local volleyball athletes sign with SMC
Page B1

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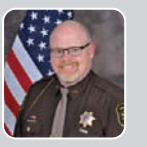

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Dowagiac News

Established 1897 • Serving Dowagiac, Sister Lakes and Cassopolis **NOVEMBER 22, 2025** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

New reigns begin

Photos by Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Taylor Costanza was crowned Miss Eau Claire/Sodus/Dowagiac 2026 Saturday evening at Watervliet High School.

New royalty

Taylor Costanza crowned Miss Eau Claire/ Sodus/Dowagiac

Deonna Cross was crowned First Runner-Up Miss Eau Claire/ Sodus/Dowagiac 2026 Saturday evening at Watervliet High School.

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

WATERVLIET — A new royal court has been crowned to represent the Eau Claire, Sodus and Dowagiac communities.

Taylor Costanza was crowned Miss Eau Claire/ Sodus/Dowagiac 2026 Sunday, Nov. 16 at Watervliet High School.

"It's kind of heavy," Costanza said of her brand new crown.

The event was the apex of the Miss Eau Claire/Sodus/Dowagiac pageant, in which Little Miss, Miss Junior Teen, Teen and Miss Eau Claire/Sodus/Dowagiac titles were awarded by a panel of judges. Costanza inherits the crown from Miss Eau Claire/Sodus/Dowagiac 2025 Malayna Klug. Deonna Cross and Alexis Campbelll of Dowagiac were crowned first and second runner-up respectively.

Contestants from each category participated in formal presentations and an on-stage question and a walk-through.

"I felt like it was a really good success, and it wouldn't have been possible without all of the extra help that I had," said Pageant Chair Beth Klug.

Costanza is a 12th grade student at St. Joseph High School. She is active in Rugby, 4-H and Health Occupations Students of America

See **ROYALTY**, page A4

Royalty revealed

Genna Martynowicz crowned Miss Cassopolis 2026

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Under the spotlight sparkles the crown of a new Miss Cassopolis.

When the dust settled, Genna Martynowicz was crowned Miss Cassopolis 2026 Saturday evening at Cassopolis Ross Beatty High School. Her younger sister, Caraline, was crowned Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis.

"It feels crazy, Martynowicz said. "I feel surreal."

The event was the pinnacle of the Miss Cassopolis pageant, in which Little Miss, Miss Junior Teen, Miss Teen, Mr. Teen and Miss and Cassopolis titles were awarded by a panel of judges. Martynowicz inherits the crown from Miss Cassopolis 2025 Merrill Adams.

A junior in a K-12 homeschooling program, Martynowicz enjoys participating in phone photography clubs, reading with her book club and volunteering with her mom at various events aimed at spreading knowledge and understanding about mental health and mental health stigma.

See **MISS CASS**, page A4

Photos by Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Miss Cassopolis Genna Martynowicz poses with her sister and Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis Caraline Martynowicz.

Leader Publications moves to new website next week

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Subscribers and visitors will soon notice a change in the Leader Publications' website.

Beginning Tuesday, Nov. 25, the newly formatted website will be part of Heraldpalladium.com and will include a newly formatted e-edition. Visitors can reach the new site by using the existing url – www.leaderpub.com – or the new url – www.heraldpalladium.com/leaderpub.

The new website aims to offer subscribers and visitors a more user-friendly, modernized and mobile-friendly online experience.

See **WEBSITE**, page A4

Cass County employees give back with food drive

SUBMITTED

CASS COUNTY — As families across the country prepare to gather around their Thanksgiving tables, Cass County employees are turning their gratitude into action by helping restock shelves at local food pantries.

Earlier this month, Cass County Administrator Jennifer Rentfrow launched an employee-led food drive in response to the temporary delay in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits caused by the federal government shutdown. Collection sites were established at the Cass

See **FOOD DRIVE**, page A4

CASSOPOLIS

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305 W. State St.
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ACTION Ministries
301 Main St.
Dowagiac, MI 49047
■ Hours: Saturdays 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Saint Francis Food Pantry
Holy Maternity of Mary Catholic Church
210 N. Front St.
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■ Hours: First and third Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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VANDALIA

Vandalia Church of God
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■ Hours: Saturdays 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

6 54708 08550 2

Today's obituaries • Page A3

Larry Neumann
Clara Wilson
Thomas Carter
Walter Frontczak

Inside today's Herald-Palladium

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Business	C4	Food	B7	Puzzles	B4
Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly?
It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ The new Miss Cassopolis is shining bright!

■ We had so much fun at the Cassopolis Sam Adams Elementary School "Lock-in." Thank you to the volunteers and the PTO for organizing the event.

■ Congratulations to the new leaders in Dowagiac. I pray for each of these people to receive guidance, patience and wisdom in their new positions.

■ New study finds no link between Tylenol use and autism. Wow, who would have guessed?

■ Congratulations to the two Niles baseball standouts. Good luck Brenden and Jaxen.

■ Snow, 70s, cold again. Welcome to Michigan.

■ I'm glad the government is open again. But, pay close attention to your medical premiums.

■ Not a lot to show for the government shutdown. We are still where we were over a month ago.

■ How will hospitals cope with the increased invoice delinquency that's bound to be caused by the spikes in health coverage, hitting like a tsunami?

Former clerk's vintage painting returns to walls of great-niece's office

SUBMITTED

CASS COUNTY — Hanging on the freshly restored walls of the Cass County Historic Courthouse, a recently installed painting of the same building comes alive in gentle, nostalgic brushstrokes painted by former County Clerk Kenneth Poe in 1966.

Rendered in warm, sunlit tones, the courthouse rises at the center of the canvas, its iconic clock tower framed by deep green trees and a sky washed in soft blue. The impressionistic scene, complete with a winding path inviting the viewer toward the arched front entrance, captures not just the architecture of the landmark but the enduring pride it represents in Cass County.

After spending decades in storage, the painting has returned to public view at the decision of current Clerk/Register Monica McMichael, Poe's great niece. Poe, who served as county clerk from 1959 to 1982, created the artwork during his years of public service – a time when the courthouse served as both his workplace and muse.

"I think it is fitting to display the painting, especially now that we have moved into the historic space," McMichael said.

For McMichael, the painting is not simply a piece of courthouse décor. It is a connection to family memory and a testament to artistic perseverance. Poe was an avid painter, and his work was well-known within the family – one of his pieces hung for years in the dining room of his sister, Carolyn Poe Gorham, McMichael's grandmother.

McMichael's cousins recently recalled that their father pursued painting despite physical limitations he faced after contracting polio.

"He was unable to hold up his arms, so he laid on a ping pong table in their basement in order to paint," McMichael said.

Now, Poe's courthouse painting will become a permanent fixture in the Clerk/Register's Office – a tribute to his 23 years of service and reflecting the lasting legacy of the historic courthouse, long considered an icon of Cass County.

Photo provided

Cass County Clerk/Register Monica McMichael poses with a painting of the Cass County Historic Courthouse created by her great-uncle, former Cass County Clerk Kenneth Poe.

LMC postpones decision on presidential search

Special committee seeks more policy, contract data

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
For Leader Publications

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Citing a need to gather additional contract and policy data, a search committee is postponing a final decision on Ken Flowers's candidacy for the Lake Michigan College presidency until next month.

LMC Board Trustee John Grover broke that news during Monday's regular meeting, where he updated his colleagues on the progress toward finding a successor for Trevor Kubatzke – who recently announced plans to retire by December 2026.

Grover is also the chairman of the search committee, which continues to evaluate whether it'll continue with its only declared candidate, Flowers, or open a nationwide search – and begin looking at other candidates. Secretary Mark Weber and Trustee Mary Jo Tomasini are the other members.

The committee met with the full board before Monday's meeting and reviewed their progress, but didn't reach any definite conclusions, he added.

"We had a full and vociferous discussion," Grover said. "We felt, at the end of two hours, we really need a little bit more data, and we'll be reaching out to the proper constituents and authorities to get that information. At this point, the committee and the board have not made a decision."

Kubatzke has led the college since 2017. Flowers, LMC's executive vice president, has served in many different positions since he started there in 1997, as a part-time machining and manufacturing instructor in 1997.

Some of his former roles include serving as dean of career and workforce education, director of workforce training and development, and chairman of the technology department.

The search committee wants to review Kubatzke's contract, "to see how that was structured, so we can really put together the best package that we can come up with," Grover said afterward. "We just didn't have enough agreement across the board, that we wanted to appoint Ken, at this point, nor did we want to go for the full search. We're balancing our options."

Another issue is the mechanics of planning the presidential transition, which will mean a review of the relevant policies that govern it, Grover said.

"We wanted to start fleshing out what that looks like," Grover said. "Once (a new president is) appointed, we figure that it's 60 to 90 days – (including) intros to the right people in the area, the right politicians."

Flowers would already be up to speed on those types of things, in light of his longtime tenure at the college – while the process would look decidedly different for a newcomer to the job, Grover said.

But Grover doesn't think another special meeting will be necessary, once the committee gets the latest information it needs. He expects the board to make a final decision next month.

"I know it sometimes feels frustrating – I'm a little bit frustrated, but I respect the attention to detail the board is putting into this. It's the most important decision this board will make," Grover said. "I mean, the selection committee has had a chance to meet, but this is the first time since October that the committee's had a chance to meet with the board, and really get them up to speed on everything."

LMC has been working with The Pauly Group, an Illinois-based consulting firm, to help guide the search, which has gone through a series of reviews.

Flowers has appeared before the board to outline his vision for LMC, on which he's expounded at a series of forums with faculty, staff and students, as well as the Presidential Cabinet, and members of the public.

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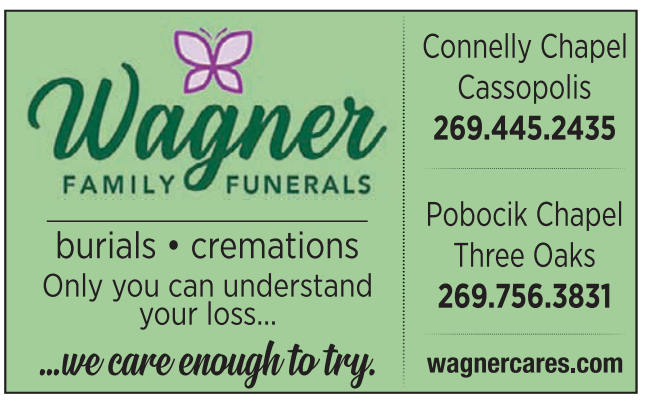

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SMC professor to write textbook on serial killers

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College Criminal Justice Professor Dr. Don Ricker is writing a book on serial killers.

A textbook, no less. He signed a contract with Kendall-Hunt Publishing of Dubuque, Iowa, with a target release date in January 2027 and recently submitted his first chapter.

RICKER

In the meantime, the former Houston detective who has directed SMC's CJ program since 2014, presented the Nov. 13 Academic Speaker Series talk, "Understanding Serial Murder: Theory, Research and Practice" at the Student Activity Center theatre, astounding students, former students and faculty and staff colleagues with his mastery of less sensational aspects of what can be a gruesome topic.

Ricker explored what motivates serial killers, how researchers study them and how this knowledge is used in real-world investigations. He covered key theories, case studies and insights from psychology and criminal justice.

"Did you know the Jack the Ripper case has been solved?" Ricker began. It took nearly 140 years, but one of history's oldest mysteries is believed to have been cleared in 2019 when DNA found on a shawl recovered from the scene of a grisly slaying pointed to Polish hairdresser Aaron Kosminski, 23, who died in a mental institution in 1919, for terrorizing Victorian London's East End in the late 1800s.

"He was one of three suspects," Ricker said. "Thanks to DNA, facial recognition and video, there are less kills per serial murderer."

Ricker noted that the FBI changed its definition, reducing the number of victims from three to two.

"Methods to commit homicides are a big change I've seen," Ricker said.

One serial murderer of particular interest to Ricker is 6-foot-9 Edmund Kemper, 76, the "Coed Killer," who murdered his grandparents at 15 and, after being paroled, killed eight women, including his mother, between May 1972 and April 1973.

"Kemper was one of 36 incarcerated serial murderers the FBI interviewed to create its profiling system," Ricker said.

"Strangulations and stabbings in the 1970s have been replaced by guns. Firearms are being used a lot more," Ricker said. "Today we see more mass murder," such as the Oct. 1, 2017, Las Vegas shooting by Stephen Paddock, 64, who opened fire from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel with more than 1,000 rounds, using bump stocks to simulate automatic weapons. Paddock killed 60 people and wounded at least 413 others attending a music festival.

On Aug. 1, 1966, Marine Charles Whitman ascended the University of Texas Tower and committed what was then the largest simultaneous mass murder in American history, gunning down 45 people inside and around the tower before he was killed by two Austin police officers. He killed his wife and mother the previous evening.

"Mass murder is a big problem today," Ricker said. "Soft targets seem to attract these individuals. I have many Houston friends working extra security jobs. Every church has one."

Ricker touched on numerous mass shootings, from Columbine and Aurora, Colo., and Virginia Tech to Uvalde, Texas, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., Michigan State, the 2017 Delphi, Ind., murders of Abigail Williams and Liberty German, and individuals such as Ed Gein and Jeffrey Dahmer.

"Expressive serial murder is very common in males," Ricker said, "because their motivation might be sexual. Females are more instrumental – motivated by money," like widow Belle Gunness of LaPorte, Ind., who placed ads for reliable men to become farming partners.

"Some male serial killers have targeted children. Albert Fish, the 'Vampire of Brooklyn,' was sadistic. He was executed in 1936. But most of the time they target adults, usually females."

"Some kill in more than one state. Ted Bundy did and Israel Keyes," who took his own life in 2012 while awaiting trial. Keyes murdered at least three people while committing at least 20 other crimes across the United States, including arsons, burglaries and bank robberies.

Bundy, executed in 1989 at 42, kidnapped, raped and murdered dozens of young women and girls between 1974-78 moving between Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Utah and Idaho.

"Male serial killers do not kill family members normally," Ricker said. "Eighty-four percent of the time they go after strangers."

Referring to Keyes, who inspired Maureen Callahan's 2019 book American Predator: The Hunt for the Most Meticulous Serial Killer of the 21st Century, Ricker said, "A lot of these guys have military backgrounds," an aspect he hopes to explore in future research.

"The most prolific American serial murderer is Samuel Little, who died in 2020." Little confessed to 93 murders by strangulation between 1970-2005.

"Travelers who are constantly moving are the hardest to catch," Ricker said. "Trauma and rejection are big factors for all serial murderers, whether male or female."

The controversial 1963 MacDonald Triad theorized that a combination of three childhood behaviors – animal cruelty, fire-setting and bed-wetting – predicted future violent behavior.

Ricker also pointed out the more menacing nicknames bestowed on men versus women, such as the "Giggling Granny," Nannie Doss, responsible for the deaths of 11 people between 1927-54.

When Adam Lanza, 20, shot and killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., including 20 children ages 6 and 7, on Dec. 14, 2012, "That hit me super hard" because his twin daughters were 7.

Mishawaka man gets jail time for role in JD's Truck Stop shooting

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES — The man who drove the car involved in a June road rage incident on U.S. 12 was sentenced to jail Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Sean Austin Rader, 26, of Mishawaka, pleaded guilty to lying to a police officer and was sentenced to two years probation, 90 days in jail with credit for 13 days served, 150 hours of community service and $678 in fines and costs.

RADER

He had initially been charged with being an accessory after the fact in relation to the June 6 in Bertrand Township near JD's Truck Stop at U.S. 12 and Mayflower Road.

Two victims were shot in the incident, one more seriously than the other and still has bullet fragments inside him. The other had injuries to his ear which was ripped by a bullet.

The shooter in the incident, Ryland Louis Mayfield, 19, of Mishawaka, pleaded guilty to two counts of assault with intent to murder and was sentenced earlier this month to two concurrent terms of 12 to 59 years in prison and 10 years to 59 years in prison.

Monday, Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch described it as a "very serious case" where people could have ended up being killed.

Defense attorney Carri Briseno said Rader acted out of fear and shock. "He absolutely did not know what to do, he had never been in a situation like this before," she said. "This was 180 degrees from anything he had known."

"He does understand the gravity of the situation," she added. "No one knew how bad the injuries were at the time. He knows he didn't just jeopardize the safety of the people in the other car but also the community. He realizes he has a debt to pay."

"I know I made a mistake," Rader said. "I wish I could go back and change what happened but I can't. I know I could have handled the situation differently."

"It was a serious offense, it's a miracle people survived," Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein said. "This was a weapon with a switch adaptation. There's a reason why they are outlawed. They turn a gun into an automatic weapon that can't be turned off."

JONES

KIEFER

McGRAW

REID

"There are consequences for your actions even though you didn't fire the gun," he added. "There were actions you could have taken to turn in your co-defendant and help the victim. I think you are remorseful, but there are consequences for your actions."

Also Monday, four other area residents were sentenced.

Isaac Malike Jones, 22, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted carrying a concealed weapon and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person and was sentenced to two concurrent terms of 180 days in jail. He must pay $266 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Sept. 23 in Niles. The jail terms are concurrent with each other but consecutive to whatever prison term he gets for violating his parole from an early criminal sexual conduct conviction.

Scarlett Angelique Kiefer, 33, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to attempted breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny and was sentenced to 210 days in jail with credit for 60 days served and $258 in fines and costs. Restitution will be determined at a later date.

The incident occurred Sept. 19 in Niles.

Herbert Lee McGraw, 40, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted disarming of a police officer, resisting and obstructing police and assault or assault and battery and was sentenced to 270 days in jail with credit for 240 days served and $316 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Nov. 21, 2024 in Niles.

Aaron Marcel Reid, 23, of Michigan City, pleaded guilty to possession of a loaded firearm and drunk driving and was sentenced to credit for three days served and $1,868 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred in Niles.

Southwestern Michigan College continues presidential search

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — The Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees will interview an additional finalist for the institution's next president.

The board will interview Dr. Klint Pleasant, of Rochester Hills, on Tuesday, Dec. 9. The decision to expand the search came after the board held public on-campus interviews on Oct. 21 and 22, but determined at a special meeting on Nov. 7 that they needed to consider more prospects.

PLEASANT

"The Board of Trustees expresses our deep thanks to the three candidates who traveled here to spend time and energy with us as we carefully evaluated each," said Chairman Thomas F. Jerdon. "We greatly appreciate every candidate and their willingness to consider SMC. While all of the candidates had fine qualities and are CEO-caliber individuals, the Board did not find exactly the right fit for the position and will therefore interview Dr. Pleasant as soon as schedules permit."

Jerdon noted that SMC's mission differs from typical community colleges, as it provides a robust student life program, substantial student housing facilities and competitive NJCAA athletics, making it resemble a four-year college in many ways.

"Additionally, many of those campuses are found in 'state-controlled' systems, as opposed to autonomous schools," Jerdon added. "While we offer career technical education in several areas and are always evaluating more programs there, SMC provides a robust student life program, substantial student housing facilities, quality performing arts, club sports and very competitive NJCAA athletics. SMC also benefits from a sizable Foundation that provides additional funding and scholarship opportunities for students."

The new finalist, Dr. Klint Pleasant, currently serves as the Senior Vice President and Special Assistant to the President, as well as the Head Men's Basketball Coach, at Rochester Christian University in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Pleasant holds a Doctor of Education from Lipscomb University, and his administrative duties since 2017 have included strategic planning, enrollment, and fundraising.

The public is invited to observe the interview at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 9, in the Fred L. Mathews Library and Conference Center on the Dowagiac campus. Updates on the presidential search can be found at swmich.edu/presidential-search/.

OBITUARIES

Death notices

Thomas Carter, passed away in Coldwater, on Nov. 8, 2025. A funeral will be held on Dec. 5 at 4 p.m. at Chapel Hill Funeral Home in Osceola, IN, with a gathering 1 hour prior to the service. Burial will follow the funeral. For more information, please go to ChapelHillMemorial.com.

Walter Frontczak, 73, of Dowagiac, passed away Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac. A complete obituary is available online at www.clarkch.com.

Clara Wilson

Aug. 2, 1925 – Nov. 7, 2025

Clara Mabel Boggs Wilson, 100, passed away in her sleep on Friday, Nov. 7, 2025 in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

The family will receive guests from 11 a.m. until the Celebration of Life Service at 12 noon, Friday, Dec. 5, at Clark Chapel, 405 Center St., Dowagiac, with Rev. Bryant L. Bacon Sr. of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Niles, officiating. Burial to follow at Riverside Cemetery in Dowagiac.

Those wishing to leave an online condolence for the family may do so at www.clarkch.com.

A full century of life began for Clara Mabel Boggs Wilson on Aug. 2, 1925, in Marlinton West Virginia, as the ninth of 11 children born to William Madison Boggs Sr. and Mabel Wheeler Boggs. Clara grew up in West Virginia where she met and married Rev. Charles E. Wilson. Their marriage lasted 55 years until his death in 2001.

In 1955, she and the family moved to Benton Harbor, then Dowagiac. As first lady of several A.M.E. churches in the area (Conner AME, Dowagiac, Quinn Chapel AME, Cassopolis, Bethel AME, Volinia, and Franklin AME, Niles), Clara was involved in numerous service and missionary activities. In addition to her church involvement, she was active in many school and community activities to support her husband and four children (Mildred, Kenneth, Doretha, and Edgar).

After she became an "empty nester," she unselfishly followed her husband and his ministry from Southwest Michigan to Washington Chapel AME Church in Roswell, New Mexico, then to Bethel AME Church in Adrian, Michigan.

Clara was a caretaker. Most who knew her would describe her as sweet and kind. Her home was always open to friends, neighbors, and especially extended family members.

Clara was preceded in death by her parents, husband, daughter, Mildred (George) Eccles, and all of her siblings: Ralph Boggs, Rev. Sanford Boggs, Rosie Gethers Williams, Rev. Carl Boggs, Orabelle Maxwell, Josephine Boggs, Mary Evans, Ethel Stewart, and Glenna Jefferson.

Clara's top priority was love and care for her family. She leaves to cherish her memory of children, Kenneth (Teresa), Edgar (Diane), Doretha Ficklin and beloved Carolyn Wilson. She also leaves eight grandchildren: Derek Wilson, Denelle Wilson, Ryan, Sheena Wilson, Bridgette Magnon, Kim Eccles, Charles and James Ficklin; and her "darling little blessed angels" great-grandchildren: Lena, Khloe, Mikayla, Charlii, and MacKenzie, in addition, many nieces, nephews and friends to treasure her memory.

Clara's motto: We were put on this earth to help each other. AND SHE DID!

Larry Neumann

April 30, 1947 – Nov. 14, 2025

Larry August Neumann, 78, of Mishawaka, Indiana, died peacefully Nov. 14, 2025, after battling dementia for several years.

Larry was born April 30, 1947, in Niles, Michigan, to Elton and Elizabeth Neumann. Larry retired in 2011 after working as an accountant for 1st Source Bank for over 20 years. He was a member of Trinity Episcopal Church where he filled multiple roles and loved singing in the choir. Larry graduated with the class of 1965 from Brandywine Highschool.

Following high school he served as a medic for the U.S. Army and is a veteran of Vietnam. He was a member of the American Kennel Club where he showed prize winning dogs, which led to him become, co-owner of Acorn Hill Kennels, where he raised St. Bernards. He also served as Milton Township treasurer for multiple years. Larry enjoyed cooking, traveling, singing and helping people.

On June 10, 1972 at Our Lady of Hungary in South Bend, Indiana, he married Sharon Kay Gerschoffer, who survives. Also surviving: his brother Gary Neumann; two daughters Mary Rayner (Jay Hart) of Lagrange, Indiana, and Sarah (Robert) Vreden of Niles, Michigan; three grandchildren, Brandon (Kaila), Timothy and Laura; and a great grandson Hunter.

A memorial service will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 9 S Fourth St., Niles, on Saturday Nov. 22, at 10 a.m.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online at halbritterwickens.com.

Bealor re-appointed Chief Judge for Cass County Courts

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — The Michigan Supreme Court has re-appointed the Honorable Carol Montavon Bealor as Chief Judge for the Cass County Courts for a two-year term, effective Jan. 1, 2026. Judge Bealor has served as Chief Judge since Jan. 1, 2022.

BEALOR

The Cass County Courts include the 43rd Circuit Court (presided over by Judge Mark A. Herman), the Cass County Probate Court (presided over by Judge Bealor), and the 4th District Court (presided over by Judge Stacey A. Rentfrow).

The appointment is made pursuant to the Chief Judge Rule (MCR 8.110), which mandates that the Chief Judge act as the presiding officer and director of court administration.

In her administrative role, Judge Bealor is responsible for supervising caseload management, directing the assignment of judicial work, determining court and judges' hours, supervising court finances and budgets, and overseeing the performance of all court personnel. The Chief Judge also represents the Court in its relations with the Supreme Court, other government agencies, and the public.

Judge Bealor stated that she is honored to continue in her leadership role.

"It is my honor to lead administrative activities for our three Courts working closely with the other two judges, our leadership team, and Court employees, as well as County Administration, elected officials, and other community partners," she stated. "In the Courts, we are fortunate to have a team comprised of talented individuals who rise to meet challenges effectively, efficiently, and with a great attitude, understanding the importance and impact of the work we do for the citizens we serve."

MISS CASS

From page A1

She plans to attend Southwestern Michigan College after high school to get her associate's degree in business or general studies before attending cosmetology school in hopes of opening her own hair salon one day.

Contestants from each category performed a dance routine before taking part in formal presentations, a few questions and a walk-through. The event also featured a performance by the Miss Michele & Co. dance team.

When asked what qualities are essential for a Miss Cassopolis and in what ways she demonstrates those qualities, Martynowicz said to be kind and accepting.

"I love everyone and I love talking to everyone and meeting new people," she said. "No matter who they are, it is always an amazing experience."

Martynowicz thanked her family, friends and pageant family for their support throughout the pageant process.

"I really don't know where I'd be without them at all," she said. "I love them, they're my rock."

Martynowicz is looking forward to bringing people together during her reign. She will be representing Cassopolis in the 2026 Blossomtime Festival in April. Established in 1906, Blossomtime is Michigan's oldest and largest multi-community festival.

"To me, being Miss Cassopolis means to bring people together and to just love everyone, talk to everyone and have fun with it, because everyone's a person," she said. "I love everyone."

Joining Martynowicz in her court of honor is first runner-up and Miss Congeniality Brylee Jones, second runner-up Kayla Grover and third runner-up Alexandra Westphal.

Throughout her reign, Martynowicz hopes to inspire future generations of Cassopolis royalty to be themselves.

"You're gonna make mistakes. You're a kid, life is about mistakes – they help you grow, they help you learn," she said. "It's about life; everything you want to be, you can."

A sister celebration

Amelia Jones was a proud big sister.

Jones, who enjoyed her own reign as Miss Dowagiac 2023, was on hand to see her younger sisters Gennavieve and Caraline crowned Miss and Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis.

Photo courtesy of Scott Rose
The 2026 Miss Cassopolis royalty was crowned Saturday, Nov. 15 at Ross Beatty High School.

"I was absolutely losing my mind," Jones said. "In my mind, I thought that both of them were going to get crowned; I thought both deserved the title but I also had to pace myself because I'm their big sister. Obviously, I think they're the best at anything they're in but they're two remarkable young women and I couldn't be more proud."

Jones, a 2023 Dowagiac grad, is currently a 4.0 student attending Walden University online. She works locally at Dowagiac Middle School as a math para pro and in her free time, she posts singing content online.

"Life's going good," she said.

Martynowicz said seeing her big sister Amelia shine on stage two years ago inspired her to pursue pageantry.

"I heard the crowd, I saw how much fun she was having. Her smile, her glowing," she said. "I wanted to experience it, and I'm so grateful that I did. I wouldn't change anything."

Just as Martynowicz was inspired by her older sister, Jones credits her younger sisters for inspiring her

"The only reason why I got crowned is because those two inspired me so much," Jones said. "Genevieve and Caraline both praised me and kind of gave me confidence I didn't have at my first pageant. It's really special to have two younger girls put you in a really good position, and then to watch them get themselves there as well."

As her sisters are set to begin their reigns, Jones encourages them to stay true to themselves.

"Don't let doubt creep in because they kicked butt," she said. "They deserve what they got and inspire every other girl they see."

Miss Cassopolis Pageant results

- Miss Cassopolis – Genna Martynowicz
- Miss Congeniality – Brylee Jones
- Miss Cassopolis 1st Runner Up – Brylee Jones
- Miss Cassopolis 2nd Runner Up – Kayla Grover
- Miss Cassopolis 3rd Runner Up – Alexandra Westphal
- Mr Teen Cassopolis – Daniel Mathews
- Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis – Caraline Martynowicz
- Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis 1st Runner Up – Bexley Hunsberger
- Miss Junior Teen Cassopolis 2nd Runner Up – Kylee Sampson
- Little Miss Cassopolis – Addalyn Hutchins
- Little Miss Cassopolis 1st Runner Up – Madalynn Sampson
- Little Miss Cassopolis 2nd Runner Up – Addison Green

ROYALTY

From page A1

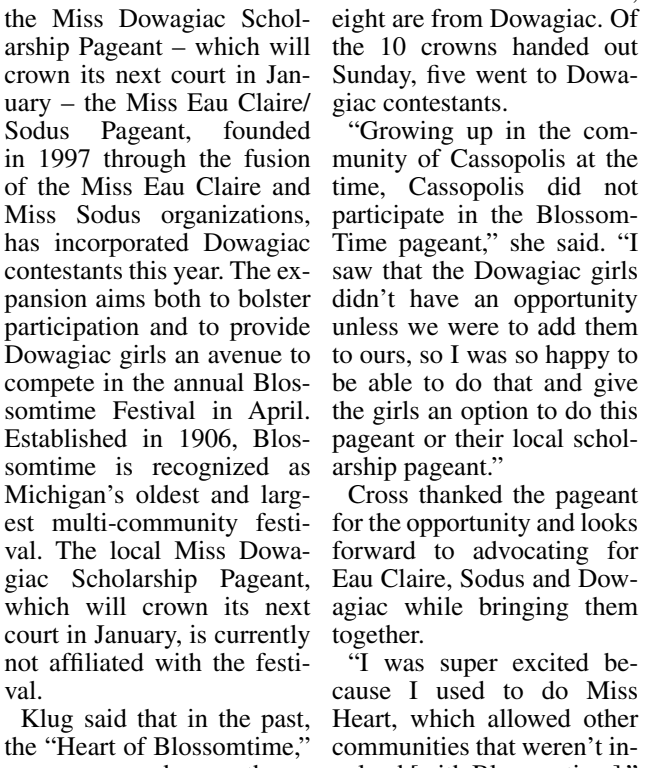
and also works at Powell House and Pink Lemonade. When she is not working at one of her two jobs or on the Family Farm, Costanza enjoys going to the gym, cheering on classmates at sporting events, watching the sunset, hunting and getting food with friends.

Costanza plans to attend college in Florida to obtain her Bachelor's of Science in nursing and to become an ER nurse.

"In working with the girls over the last couple of months, I've gotten to learn a little bit about each and every one of the contestants," Klug said. "Taylor is a very sweet and genuine girl. She has heart in everything she does, so I think that's exactly what the judges saw today."

Costanza said she looks forward to using her platform to educate the communities about their food and where it comes from.

"I think it's really important for people to know where their food comes from, and I have really seen this as an opportunity to tell people where their food comes from, because again, I've grown up on a farm my entire life and it's so important to me."


Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
From left: Deonna Cross, Taylor Costanza, Alexis Campbell, Hayleigh Fentress.

A 2025 Dowagiac Union graduate, Cross is currently a sophomore at Lake Michigan College. She is an active 4-H member and is currently employed as a barista at Biggby Coffee. While a student at Dowagiac, Cross participated in Rotary Interact Club, National Honor Society, the SMC dual enrollment program and the Educational Talent Search program.

In her spare time, Cross engages in various activities, including spending time with family and friends. Listening to oldies music, reading, visiting Six Flags Amusement Park, creating floral arrangements, attending concerts and fishing. Diana's future plans are to pursue a career as an ultrasound tech specializing in obstetrics.

"It's extremely exciting, really," Cross said of her new title. "Especially to be able to represent Dowagiac in Blossomtime."

Not to be confused with the Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant – which will crown its next court in January – the Miss Eau Claire/Sodus Pageant, founded in 1997 through the fusion of the Miss Eau Claire and Miss Sodus organizations, has incorporated Dowagiac contestants this year. The expansion aims both to bolster participation and to provide Dowagiac girls an avenue to compete in the annual Blossomtime Festival in April. Established in 1906, Blossomtime is recognized as Michigan's oldest and largest multi-community festival. The local Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant, which will crown its next court in January, is currently not affiliated with the festival.

Klug said that in the past, the "Heart of Blossomtime," program served as a pathway for girls from communities lacking a preliminary pageant to compete in the main Blossomtime Festival. With that pathway closed, Klug, who was crowned both Miss Cassopolis and Miss Heart of Blossomtime in 1998, believes that adding Dowagiac contestants to their pageant was necessary to give those girls an opportunity to compete in Blossomtime.

Of the 16 total contestants, eight are from Dowagiac. Of the 10 crowns handed out Sunday, five went to Dowagiac contestants.

"Growing up in the community of Cassopolis at the time, Cassopolis did not participate in the Blossom-Time pageant," she said. "I saw that the Dowagiac girls didn't have an opportunity unless we were to add them to ours, so I was so happy to be able to do that and give the girls an option to do this pageant or their local scholarship pageant."

Cross thanked the pageant for the opportunity and looks forward to advocating for Eau Claire, Sodus and Dowagiac while bringing them together.

"I was super excited because I used to do Miss Heart, which allowed other communities that weren't involved [with Blossomtime]," Cross said. "So Miss Eau Claire having the opportunity for Dowagiac was extremely exciting and I'm so excited for this opportunity."

The pageant was special for Klug, who witnessed her daughters Malayna and Mya carry out their final duties as Miss and Miss Teen Eau Claire/Sodus 2025. As the chair of the pageant, Klug had a front row seat to her daughters' exploits throughout her reign, which included seeing Malayna – a 2025 Dowagiac graduate – earn a second runner-up finish at the 2025 Blossomtime Festival.

"It has been absolutely amazing," Klug said. "I have been a part of Blossomtime from being a queen myself to the chairperson, to helping with the queens committee at Blossomtime and this was the most rewarding job of them all. It was absolutely amazing and I love the extra time I have spent with both my daughters."

Miss Eau Claire/ Sodus/Dowagiac results

- Queen – Taylor Costanza (Jennifer and Brett)
- 1st Runner Up – Deonna Cross (Shannon and the late Les Cross)
- 2nd Runner Up – Alexis Campbell (Amber Perkins and Chris Campbell)
- Miss Congeniality – Hayleigh Fentress (Jennifer and Heath)
- Teen – Cecily Grant (Christine and Jason)
- 1st Runner Up – Gemma Richards (Melissa and Mark)
- 2nd Runner Up – Ava Kelley (Sarah and Jason)
- Jr. Teen – Carissa Grant (Christine and Jason)
- 1st Runner Up – Graciana Pompey (Beth and Jason)
- 2nd Runner Up – Lillian Leitz (Billie and Everett)

WEBSITE

From page A1

The website can also be accessed on the main heraldpalladium.com website by selecting the "Leader Publications" tab on the main page.

Leader Publications, headquartered in Niles, was purchased by Paxton Media Group in August. PMG owns and operates several Michiana newspapers including The Herald-Palladium, Leader Publications, Harbor Country News, South Haven Tribune, La Porte County Herald-Dispatch and The Elkhart Truth.

Readers with questions about the website transition can email Leader Publications Managing Editor Maxwell Harden at max.harden@leaderpub.com.

FOOD DRIVE

From page A1

County Administration Building, Sheriff's Office, Law & Courts and Medical Care Facility, allowing staff across several departments and offices to contribute.

"I am so incredibly proud of the amount of food our team collected," Rentfrow said. "It speaks volumes about who our employees are at their core, people who genuinely care about the residents we serve."

Although federal operations have since resumed and SNAP benefits are once again being distributed, the delay placed an increased strain on area food pantries, many of which saw a surge in need as residents waited for assistance. Cass County employees hope their donations will help replenish depleted shelves and support local families heading into the holiday season.

"The dedication of our employees extends far beyond their day-to-day responsibilities," Rentfrow added. "Their willingness to step in and support local families is something I am truly grateful for."

Community members who wish to join in supporting local families may donate directly to one of the following food pantries serving Cass County. Individuals in need are encouraged to visit pantries during the hours listed.

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BERRIEN COUNTY TRIAL COURT

Gomez convicted of killing Eau Claire firefighter

By JULIE SWIDWA
For Leader Publications

ST. JOSEPH — A Berrien County jury, after seven hours of deliberation over two days, found Rigoberto Gomez guilty Thursday of second-degree murder in the shooting death of an off-duty Eau Claire volunteer firefighter.

GOMEZ

The jury apparently believed Gomez killed 36-year-old Chad Medlin outside a bar in Eau Claire last November but did not find that the defendant had planned the murder.

Gomez was charged with open murder, meaning the jury could consider first-degree murder, which requires pre-meditation, or second-degree murder, which does not. First-degree murder, upon conviction, carries a mandatory penalty of life in prison without parole for an adult in Michigan. Instead, Gomez faces any term of years up to life when he is sentenced early next year.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gary Bruce, who presided over the nearly two-week-long trial, set sentencing for Jan. 5, 2026.

The jury also found Gomez guilty of several lesser felony charges, including assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, assault with a dangerous weapon, four counts of felony firearms and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person.

The case went to the jury at about noon Wednesday following closing arguments delivered by lawyers. Jurors were sent home at 5 p.m. Wednesday and returned at 8:30 a.m. Thursday to resume deliberations.

Throughout the trial, Defense lawyer Caleb Grimes worked on building a self-defense case, while Berrien Assistant Prosecutor Kate Arnold said the case was about choices Gomez made late the night of Nov. 1, 2024, and "choices have consequences."

"We appreciate the jury's careful consideration of the evidence in this important case, and we respect and accept their verdict," Arnold said in a written statement following the verdict Thursday. "We thank them for their service."

In an interview outside the courtroom after the verdict, Grimes said he, Gomez and his family would have liked to see him cleared of any murder charge.

"But the jury disagreed, unfortunately. I'm disappointed for Rigo and his family. We were hoping for a different outcome," Grimes said. "I feel bad for the family."

After speaking privately with the family of Gomez, Grimes said they were too distraught to talk to reporters.

Security was high for the case, with family members of both Gomez and Medlin packing the courtroom most days. After the verdict was read, the jury and the Medlin family were led out of the courthouse and to their cars accompanied by several Berrien County Sheriff's deputies and court officers.

Brad Blakeman, a friend of the victim, stayed behind and offered an interview with The Herald-Palladium.

He said he and Chad Medlin had been friends since high school and had worked together at the Eau Claire Fire Department.

"He was a really good guy. He'd give anyone the shirt off his back. He was a big teddy bear and would do anything to make you laugh," Blakeman said. "I would have preferred a first-degree murder conviction, but overall I'm happy. I'm impressed with the prosecutor fighting for a very innocent life that was taken too soon."

The event leading up to the shooting outside the Hometown Bar in Eau Claire began inside the establishment with a verbal altercation between Gomez and Medlin, according to witness testimony throughout the trial. According to testimony, the altercation, although never physical, escalated to a point where employees decided to close the bar early.

According to testimony, the argument was over Medlin accusing Gomez of harmful treatment of women. The two did not know each other prior to the encounter, but a woman had confided in Medlin about things Gomez allegedly had done, according to testimony.

After the bar closed, Medlin and his friends gathered outside the establishment to talk about where they might go next.

According to testimony, and video surveillance footage captured by outdoor cameras from outside cameras, Gomez, who had left the bar, returned about 15 minutes later and fatally shot Medlin.

Congress pushes hemp crackdown

Feels pressure from states and marijuana industry

By KEVIN HARDY
Stateline.org (TNS)

A provision significantly limiting the sale of intoxicating hemp products made its way into legislation to reopen the federal government just a day before the Senate approved the bill. Its inclusion follows years of pressure from states and the marijuana industry.

While states continue to expand access to legal marijuana, a separate market of hemp-derived intoxicants has blossomed. The products, from drinks to gummies, are sold in gas stations and smoke shops. Critics say some companies have exploited a legal loophole from 2018 to manufacture products that get people high – without the safety regulations and taxes facing the legal marijuana industry.

That's led dozens of states to limit or ban certain intoxicating hemp products. Most states also have pushed for federal changes, though some farm states worry the pending federal bill – which the House is expected to vote on as soon as today – goes too far.

A bipartisan group of 39 state attorneys general recently urged Congress to clarify the federal definition of hemp, arguing that the underregulated industry threatens public health and undermines law enforcement.

Texas lawmakers this year approved a strict ban on intoxicating hemp, but that measure was vetoed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott. The governor raised constitutional concerns because federal law allowed the products, but he then issued an executive order increasing state agency regulations, including age restrictions.

This summer, Florida regulators seized tens of thousands of packages of hemp products that failed to meet new child protection standards, including child-resistant packaging, marketing restrictions and enhanced labeling rules. In Tallahassee, the state Senate approved a ban on hemp-derived THC products, including beverages, but that measure died in the state House. A similar effort last year was vetoed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who said it would harm small businesses.

> **"There's a big part of that activity that you can't control as a state when something is federally legal, and so that's one thing that they're asking for is federal leadership on this issue."**
>
> **KATHARINE NEILL HARRIS**
> Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy

Last month, California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation strengthening state enforcement of its ban on intoxicating hemp products. Similarly, Ohio Republican Gov. Mike DeWine declared an emergency last month in an executive order banning intoxicating hemp products for 90 days while lawmakers debate potential legislation.

Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the primary psychoactive component of the cannabis plant. The 39 state attorneys general argue manufacturers are manipulating hemp to produce synthetic THC that can be more intoxicating than marijuana.

"In this way, legal, non-intoxicating hemp is used to make Frankenstein THC products that get adults high and harm and even kill children," the attorneys general wrote.

Hemp-derived gummies and beverages are sold without consistent age restrictions or labeling regulations and oftentimes resemble candy. During his announcement, DeWine showcased brightly packaged intoxicating hemp products that resembled name-brand candy products.

"Certainly, it's easy to see how a child will confuse this product with real candy and eat a few gummy bears and ingest enough THC to require hospitalization," he said, according to the Ohio Capital Journal.

Though it has faced mounting restrictions in the states, the hemp industry says the federal change poses an existential threat.

On Monday, the U.S. Hemp Roundtable said the legislation pending in Congress would wipe out 95 percent of the nation's $28.4 billion hemp industry.

"The language will force patients, seniors and veterans who rely on hemp products to break federal criminal law to acquire them," the trade group posted online.

Jonathan Miller, general counsel for the organization, said the industry has been pushing for regulation rather than outright prohibition. He acknowledged the problem of bad actors, but said those can be addressed with strong regulations like those that exist in Kentucky and Minnesota.

"These are good examples of states that have put together robust regulations. But we need to see that at the federal level, and we've been supporting legislation to do that for the last seven years," he told Stateline.

Republican U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, Kentucky's senior senator, said he included the hemp measure in the bill to close an unintended legal loophole and that the measure would still allow farmers to grow hemp for fiber, oil and drug trials.

But fellow Kentucky Republican U.S. Sen. Rand Paul said the move would "eradicate the hemp industry" and could override some state laws. Paul offered an amendment to remove the hemp provision but failed.

The hemp loophole

Hemp derives from the same cannabis species as marijuana, but is legally defined by its lower levels of THC, the psychoactive component of the plant.

While marijuana remains illegal under federal law, Congress sanctioned hemp in the 2018 farm bill to allow an agricultural market for hemp-based textiles, animal feeds and human wellness products centered on cannabidiol, or CBD, products. The farm bill allowed cultivation of hemp plants with a THC concentration of 0.3 percent or lower by dry weight.

But that threshold has become essentially meaningless, said Katharine Neill Harris, a fellow in drug policy at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy.

That's because manufacturers have found ways to convert legal hemp plants into potent forms of synthetic marijuana. Aside from the potential of creating very strong products, she said the process requires the addition of solvents and other ingredients that raise many safety questions.

"With marijuana products, you can get some very potent products," she said. "But the psychoactive components to THC are naturally occurring. It naturally occurs in that natural amount. You're not doing a whole bunch of manipulation to increase the potency of the product and adding ingredients."

Harris has tracked the growing number of states regulating the industry: Six states and the District of Columbia now ban all consumable hemp products with any amount of THC. In 24 states, intoxicating hemp products are permitted, though 15 of those states allow only low-potency products.

But even states with strict regulations still must contend with legal online markets.

"There's a big part of that activity that you can't control as a state when something is federally legal, and so that's one thing that they're asking for is federal leadership on this issue," she said. "I think there is a big demand for some sort of industry standards."

If approved by Congress and signed by the president, as expected, the new hemp legislation will likely have uneven impacts across the states.

For example, the change likely won't dramatically alter the legal landscape in Alaska, where the regulators have banned all intoxicating hemp products. Marijuana businesses complain those products are still being sold, despite the ban.

But in a state like Nebraska, where lawmakers have been unsuccessful in limiting intoxicating hemp, the change could drastically alter both consumer access and business sales, depending on enforcement.

On Monday, Paul said the federal legislation would wipe away hemp regulations in many states, including Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine and Utah.

"The bill before us nullifies all these state laws," he said.

'Running with knives'

The hemp industry has argued that a lot of the opposition to it stems from marijuana businesses looking to protect their own markets, noting that campaigns for restrictions are often more organized in states that have legalized marijuana.

But producers of intoxicating hemp are looking for market access without the associated safety regulations and tax structures states have created for marijuana, argued Chris Lindsey, the director of state advocacy and public policy at the American Trade Association for Cannabis and Hemp, an organization representing the legal marijuana industry.

"They want to have some kind of regulatory framework that's somehow different than the one that states already have [for marijuana]," he said.

His organization cheered the Senate's efforts "to address the dangerous proliferation of unregulated synthetic THC products."

Lindsey said hemp-derived products can contain contaminants, including pesticides. Many hemp products can be sourced cheaply overseas, he said, and with lax oversight, there is no system to recall tainted products here.

"To me, that's like running with knives," he told Stateline.

The Missouri Cannabis Trade Association recently purchased hemp products from gas stations and smoke shops from across the state to test them in an effort to show they need more regulation.

In its "Missouri Hemp Hoax Report, " the organization said independent testing found 53 of the 55 products purchased were actually intoxicating marijuana well above the legal limit of THC. Third-party lab results also showed some of the products contained pesticides and heavy metals.

Those results underscore that the products should face the same rules as legal marijuana does, said Andrew Mullins, president and executive director of the cannabis trade association. State law requires marijuana to be grown and manufactured in Missouri, mandates lab testing and allows for sales only at licensed dispensaries.

"In my mind, if it's marijuana, which most of this is, then it should be regulated like marijuana," Mullins said.

He said calling the unregulated products "hemp" is akin to someone selling whiskey and calling it corn: "Everybody is using hemp as a cover to basically sell intoxicating drugs."

Mullins acknowledged the confusion among policymakers and law enforcement. But he said there are already laws – including those against trafficking marijuana without a license – that could help address the issue.

Catherine Hanaway, a Republican who was sworn in as Missouri's new attorney general in September, has vowed action on unregulated hemp products, particularly THC beverages that are booming in popularity.

"Our focus is on the health and safety of Missourians," James Lawson, her deputy chief of staff, told the Missouri Independent last month. "This is an unregulated industry that makes untested, unknown substances available to the public without any oversight, including children where we think it's particularly detrimental."

WEATHER

Today: Sunny, with a high near 47. Calm wind becoming northwest around 5 mph in the afternoon.

Tonight: Partly cloudy, with a low around 33.

Sunday: Sunny, with a high near 53.

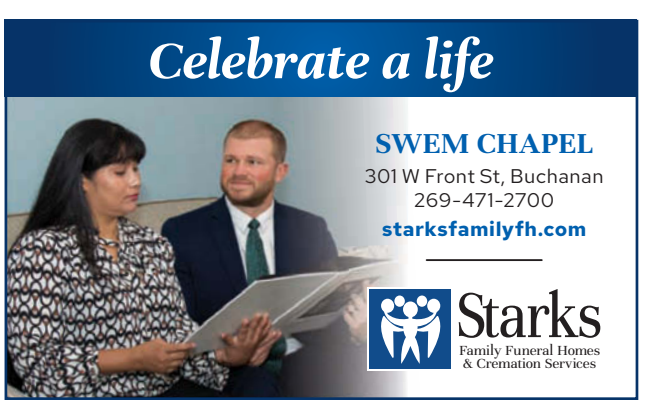
Sunday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 33.

Monday: A 30 percent chance of rain after 1 p.m. Partly sunny, a high near 54.

Monday Night: Rain. Low around 42. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent.

Tuesday: Rain likely. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 55. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent.

Tuesday Night: A 40 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 35.



Vandalia to host annual Winter Coat Drive Dec. 7

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

VANDALIA — The Village of Vandalia is gearing up to host an event aiming to keep people warm as the weather turns.

The village will host a Winter Coat Drive Saturday, Dec. 7 at the Village Hall, 18035 State St., Vandalia. The community is asked to help families in need by donating clean, new, or gently used winter gear that can last through the season.

Donations accepted include coats, hats, boots, gloves, clothes, shoes and blankets.

Donation drop-offs began Nov. 1 and are accepted at the Village Hall, 18035 State St., Vandalia, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to noon.

That day is a big day," said Village President Evan Hickman. "We keep it full in here. We have refreshments, cookies and candy for the kids. I am here the whole time and all the trustees and many people in the village help out. We all just stay here and have a good time handing out the clothes and whatever else we get to give out."

Hickman said the idea for a coat drive was born out his election campaign.

"It was a passion project of ours when I started campaigning," said Village President Evan Hickman. "We asked everybody what the needs are in the village, and what could help the most. Everybody said they can't get to any stores. We knew that food was a necessity but clothing is getting very expensive. My wife, who is the village clerk, came up with the idea for a coat drive."

The inaugural coat drive took place last year and according to Hickman, it was a success. More than 100 people turned out to receive a coat.

"The response from it last year was amazing," he said. "We had people passing through the village from out of state who saw it on our sign. We got checks mailed in, and the response was incredible. We had single dads come in with their little girls. The girls got jackets, and the dad was tearing up, glad he finally asked for help. After that, it lit a fire under us to keep it going year to year. It's nothing the village has to put too much into because of the work from the volunteers and good, kindhearted people. It's basically a way for us to try to clothe the village and anyone who needs something warm to wear."

For Hickman, seeing the community rally around the coat drive is an "amazing feeling."

"It brings so much joy. I had to step out of the room once because seeing the kids come in and run and pick out their coats, their parents are just happy because this is one place you don't have to worry about price," he said. "I'm so grateful to be in the spot to be able to do this. Last year, we had 100 kids come through. It was very moving to know that even if one kid doesn't have to go cold throughout the winter because of a jacket they were able to get here, that's worth everything."

In addition to the coat drive, Hickman said the village has a "Blessing box" outside the village hall stocked with food, baby food and other necessities.

"It looks like what people would see as a free book box, but I built it myself," he said. "We've had a very good turnout of people stocking that box."

Readers can call (269) 476-2344 for additional information about the coat drive.

Who wins and who loses as the U.S. retires the penny

THE CONVERSATION

By NANCY FORSTER-HOLT
Clinical Associate Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of Rhode Island

By now, Americans know the strange math of minting: Each penny costs about 4 cents to make. Chances are you have some in a jar, or scattered among pockets, purses and car ashtrays.

As small as it is, the penny punches above its weight culturally. If it ever disappeared, so too might the simple kindness of "take a penny, leave a penny," alongside timeless classics like penny loafers and the tradition of tossing a penny in a fountain.

But the penny's days are indeed numbered. The U.S. Mint pressed the last 1-cent coin on Nov. 12, 2025, following a directive from the White House. While pennies will remain legal tender, old ones will gradually be taken out of circulation.

The impact of this change will reach beyond coin jars. Its ripples will be felt as small, cash-reliant Main Street merchants face another test of adaptability in a system that increasingly favors scale, technology and plastic. It will also be felt by people who rely on cash – often people without bank accounts who have the least room to absorb even tiny shifts in price.

My interest comes from my former lives as the chief financial officer of a large credit union and as a small-business owner. Now, I bridge theory and practice as a professor – or "prac-ademic," as I like to say – studying the challenges facing Main Street businesses.

When the penny goes away, some will win, some will lose – and for some, it'll be a coin toss.

Heads, they win

The first and most obvious winner is the U.S. government, which will save tens of millions of dollars each year by no longer minting a coin that costs more to make than it's worth. Ending production seems like an easy call for efficiency's sake.

Banks and credit unions will likely benefit too. Pennies are disproportionately expensive to handle: Every bag of pennies gets counted, sorted, rolled, verified and shipped back to the Federal Reserve, generating labor and equipment costs that far exceed the coin's value. Removing the smallest denomination strips out an entire layer of cost and friction from bank operations – savings that scale immediately across thousands of branches.

Another beneficiary, this one hiding in plain sight, is who transports the cash: the armored-carrier industry. For companies such as Loomis and Brink's, pennies are heavy, low-value cargo, and a logistical money-loser. Removing penny pickups eliminates one of their most inefficient services, reducing fuel use, labor hours and truck wear.

Large retailers will likely also win. Size and scale make it easier to undertake preparations both big and small, such as reprogramming cash registers and stockpiling pennies to hedge against shortages. Larger companies also have the talent and bandwidth to figure out the true costs and benefits of accepting cash or noncash payments. If most of their transactions are already digital, they could be relatively indifferent to the end of the penny.

Large retailers also negotiate lower card processing rates, which are the fees merchants must pay to the card companies every time a customer uses a credit or debit card. These rates aren't uniform: Large chains get discounted pricing based on sales volume, while small businesses face higher costs for identical transactions. It follows that any policy change leading to more people paying with plastic will disproportionately benefit larger retailers.

To be sure, some banks, credit unions and large retailers have expressed concern and surprise at the pace of the change and the lack of guidance from the federal government. But for most, the penny's end is a minor operational footnote. Online-only businesses operate in this frictionless world as well – no coins, no counting, no issue.

Tails, they lose

For small, Main Street businesses, the penny's disappearance highlights the structural disadvantages they already face – and I think it will force a reckoning about what types of payments benefit their bottom lines.

As pennies phase out, local businesses are likely to round cash transactions to the nearest 5 cents, resulting in what economists call a "rounding tax." Rounding to the nearest nickel could cost businesses and consumers about $6 million annually, according to researchers with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

And it wouldn't offer much relief if more shoppers turn to plastic and other noncash payments. That's because most small merchants lack the negotiating power to lower their card-processing fees.

Card acceptance comes with a layered stack of costs for merchants: interchange fees, network assessments, processor markups, gateway fees, chargeback penalties, terminal rentals and more. Together, these average 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent per sale for many small businesses. Also, there are expenses related to adopting the latest, greatest payment methods, and then keeping them updated.

Consider a quick-service restaurant where a typical customer spends $14. If that customer pays with a credit card and the business pays an average processing fee of 2.2 percent plus 10 cents per transaction, each sale incurs about 41 cents in fees. Even low-cost debit cards include fixed per-transaction charges that disproportionately affect businesses when the per-sale average is small. When the average sale is $10 or less, it barely covers the cost to process it as a card transaction.

That said, handling cash also comes at a cost, and it's not always easyto know what's best for business. One analysis found that accepting cash costs 53 cents per $100 of sales, compared with $1.12 for accepting debit payments using a signature and 81 cents for PIN-based debit. Of course, businesses also should keep in mind that different customers will have different payment preferences.

And speaking of customers, those who are most likely to feel the pinch from the end of the penny are people who still rely on cash: older adults, lower-income households, people without credit cards or bank accounts – either unbanked or under-banked – and people who budget in cash because it provides firmer spending discipline.

A few cents added to a grocery total or a convenience store purchase may not matter to someone tapping a rewards credit card, but cash-dependent consumers experience those small increases directly, with no offsetting points, perks or end-of-month cash back. And yes, prices often end in 99 cents, which get rounded up, not down. So the burden falls disproportionately on those least equipped to absorb even small, cumulative increases.

For some, it's a coin toss

Digital-first consumers may barely notice the penny's disappearance. They tap phones, scan QR codes and use payment apps that will still settle to the exact amount.

While businesses haven't received final guidance on how to handle payments in the post-penny era, one option is to price electronic transactions to the cent and round cash transactions to the nearest nickel. If that were widely adopted, digital payments alone would remain precise.

Consumers who use cashless payments may believe their choice doesn't affect how they shop, but behavioral research says otherwise. Credit cards reduce the "pain of paying," leading people to spend more – often 10 percent to 20 percent more than with cash. Credit card rewards programs further incentivize card use. In one last nod to the cost of noncash payments, those rewards are funded by higher merchant fees that ultimately translate into higher retail prices.

Killing the penny makes economic sense for the government and some businesses, yet it also highlights a deeper truth: Efficiency tends to reward the already efficient. For many, however, even when the change is small, every cent still counts.

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Sports

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Volleyball standouts sign to play at SMC

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A trio of local volleyball standouts will be playing close to home at the next level.

Cassopolis' Tori Burks, Dowagiac's Ava Nate and Niles' Maddie Zache recently signed with the Southwestern Michigan College volleyball team.

Tori is the younger sister of SMC sophomore Ryli Burks, a two-year starter for the Roadrunners.

"Tori is a tough, quick setter and right-side attacker with high volleyball IQ who comes from a volleyball family, a successful high school program and a high-level club at NIVA," said SMC Head Coach Jenny Nate. "Tori has great court presence, leadership, and is a playmaker. She is exactly the type of athlete who will help continue to add to our positive culture here at SMC. We are excited to add her to the 2026 SMC Volleyball Team next fall."

Burks earned first team all-conference honors, and helped lead the Rangers to a conference championship.

"Tori comes with a high volleyball IQ," added Cassopolis Head Coach Linda Martin. "She is a versatile player who can hit or set. She is intense and driven to play at a high level. Her play has been critical to our success."

See **STANDOUTS**, page B1

Photo provided

Niles' Maddie Zache (left), Cassopolis' Tori Burks (middle) and Dowagiac's Ava Nate (right) recently signed with the Southwestern Michigan College volleyball team.

From Chieftain to Trojan

Dowagiac's Carpenter signs with Trevecca softball

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Marlie Carpenter has dreamed of playing college softball ever since she was a child.

After more than a decade of hard work on and off the softball diamond, the Dowagiac standout made her dream a reality Thursday by signing with Trevecca Nazarene University in front of friends and family at Dowagiac Union High School.

"It's like a huge weight lifted off," she said. "Now I can freely go out and have fun. A lot of work has paid off, and it's finally a relief to see it all happen."

A three-sport athlete, Carpenter has earned all-conference honors in volleyball, basketball and softball. As a junior, Carpenter helped the Chieftains earn a 25-8 record and the program's first conference title since 2007. She was named to the All-Lakeland Conference First Team, All District and All Region Teams in softball and earned an All-State Honorable Mention.

Trevecca Nazarene University is a private Nazarene liberal arts college in Nashville, Tennessee that is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. The Trojans compete in the Gulf South Conference. Carpenter said she received three offers to play softball at the next level and knew that Trevecca was the right fit after visiting.

"Trevecca is an amazing school," she said. "I went down there to a camp and the coaches were amazing. Instantly, I fell in love with the school and the area. It's a Christian school so I can work on my faith and I love that program."

Carpenter thanked the dozens of family, friends and coaches in attendance for supporting her from the very beginning.

"It means so much because they are the drive that helps me keep going," she said. "They lift me up when I'm down and help me get through it."

With her final softball season just months away, Carpenter has a pair of goals for herself and her teammates she believes are in reach: A state championship and the school record for home runs, which happens to belong to her older sister, Sierra. Marlie tallied seven home runs last year, just two off the record nine set by Sierra in 2019.

"My number one goal is beating my sister's home run record," Carpenter said. "I've had that in my mind all four years. I also want a state title this year. We have everything it takes; now we need to go win it."

Carpenter looks forward to living out her dream over the next four years.

"Playing ball, it's been my goal ever since I was a little girl; that was my dream," she said. "Going out and playing at the collegiate level makes me happy. It's where I want to be. It's my happy place."

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Marlie Carpenter (center) poses with her parents Christina and Robert after signing her National Letter of Intent to play softball at Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Athletes, coaches honored

Wolverine Conference recognizes several standout Eddies

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — Several Edwardsburg athletes and coaches were recognized by the Wolverine Conference for their performances throughout the fall season.

Five Edwardsburg coaches were recognized with Wolverine Conference Coach of the Year Awards: Ken Grinage (Girls Bowling), Steve Harman (Boys Bowling), Sean Jesse (Boys Soccer), Sarah Strefling (Volleyball), and Kim Bartz (Girls Tennis).

Volleyball saw Mya Eberlein, Ella Laskowski, and Sarah Pippin named to the First Team, with Rylie Rosenkrantz earning Second Team honors.

In boys soccer, the First Team included Brayden Fischer, Austin Leak, and Aleck Rodriguez. Maverick Gates, Reed Gates, and Mobius Stubblefield were named to the Second Team, while Landon Goetz and Chance Jacobs received Honorable Mention.

The football team saw Luke Bidwell named to the First Team Defense. Giovanni Orue and Luke Harman earned Second Team Offense honors, Cameron Hayden made Second Team Defense and Logan Kovatch was named to the Second Team Special Teams. Alex Casteluci, Cody Heidt and Brady Englehart received Honorable Mention.

Other athletic honors included Jada Gaideski making First Team for girls golf and boys tennis players Adam Redden and Logan Summy earning Honorable Mention. For cross country, Grace Leman and Georgia Babcock were recognized for the girls team while George Scupham, Ethan Ferguson and Gavin Ayers were recognized for the boys team.

Notre Dame men's team earns win over Bellarmine

NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The Notre Dame men's basketball team remains undefeated at home this season after besting the Bellarmine Knights 86-79 on Wednesday evening.

The Fighting Irish utilized a 25-5 scoring run between the end of the first half and start of the second to flip the script and go up 20 points in the game. The Knights made an interesting late with a 10 of 11 shooting run, but Notre Dame hit its free throws late to put it away.

Junior point guard Markus Burton recorded his third game of 20+ on Wednesday, dropping 25 points on 10-13 shooting. He also produced a season high four assists.

Freshman guard Jalen Haralson notched his third straight game in doubles with 16 points, while also grabbing four boards and dishing out five assists.

Graduate forward Carson Towt collected his second double-double on the season with 12 points and 11 rebounds, which also means he's 5-5 in games this year with double-digit rebounds, extending his streak.

See **IRISH**, page B1

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

Notre Dame guard Markus Burton (3) looks to get by a Bellarmine defender.

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WMU football beats NIU 35-13

WESTERN MICHIGAN ATHLETICS

DEKALB, Ill. — The Western Michigan football team scored 35 unanswered points to erase a 13-0 deficit and win on the road at Northern Illinois on Tuesday night.

The Broncos (7-4, 6-1 MAC) rushed for a season-high 361 yards with Jalen Buckley (133), Devin Miles (105) and Broc Lowry (100) all reaching the century mark. Miles eclipsed 100 for the first time in his career, while Lowry notched his second. Buckley had a game-high 24 carries and two touchdowns, while Lowry found the endzone three times.

Graduate transfer linebacker James Camden had a game-high 13 tackles, including a half sack. Senior defensive end Nadame Tucker had eight tackles,, 1.5 tackles for loss and a half sack. WMU limited NIU's offense to 252 yards of total offense, including just 78 through the air.

Northern Illinois quickly got on the board after starting with the ball. Telly Johnson Jr. capped off a 75-yard drive with a 43-yard touchdown run to give the Huskies a 7-0 lead. On WMU's first play from scrimmage, Lowry's pass was deflected and picked off at the WMU 18. The Bronco defense forced a three-and-out and caused NIU to back up two yards before Andrew Glass connected on a 39-yard field goal to push the lead to 10-0 with 9:08 left in the first quarter.

After the teams traded punts, the Broncos drove into NIU territory and went for it on fourth and three from the Huskies' 27. Lowry connected with Tailique Williams but he was stopped short of the first down. Northern Illinois marched down the field but WMU's defense met the challenge and forced NIU to settle for a field goal. Glass connected on his second of the night, this time from 41 yards to push the lead to 13-0.

WMU saw its ensuing drive stall at the NIU 43, but redshirt sophomore punter Ryan Millmore dropped a punt that was downed at the six. Western Michigan's defense forced a three-and-out and the Bronco offense took over at midfield. Lowry handed it off to Miles and the senior running back took off down the right sideline for 32 yards down to the 18. Lowry then ran it in for the 18-yard score to get the Broncos on the board, cutting the lead to 13-7.

On NIU's next drive the Broncos stopped it at the 39. The Huskies opted to go for it in their own territory and Chavon Wright's rush was stopped by Camden for the turnover on downs. After a pair of rushes by Miles, Buckley took over and ran the ball five straight times, capping it off with an eight-yard touchdown run.

Western Michigan took a 14-13 lead into the half and got the ball to start the third quarter. Miles, Buckley and Lowry moved the Broncos down the field for a 12-play, 89-yard drive that resulted in an eight-yard touchdown run that pushed the lead to 21-13. That drive ate up 6:44 on the clock and the Broncos later went on a 15-play, 76-yard touchdown drive that started at 2:19 in the third and ended at 9:46 in the fourth quarter, with Buckley running it in from the one.

On the next drive, WMU forced a three-and-out and a bad snap on the punt resulted in the Broncos taking over on the NIU five. Two plays later, Lowry ran it in for his third touchdown of the night and the WMU extended its lead to 35-13.

NIU later added a touchdown with 4:25 to play, missing the two-point conversion. The Broncos then recovered the on-side kick and ran the clock out, only attempting one pass in the entirety of the second half.

Western Michigan wraps up the 2025 regular season on the road at Eastern Michigan next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. The game can be watched live on ESPN2 and heard live on the Bronco Media Network.

STANDOUTS

From page B2

Ava Nate was All-Conference Honorable Mention the past two years.

"Ava is a strong, athletic attacker and blocker on the net," said SMC Coach Jenny Nate. "She has height and has worked incredibly hard the past four years to excel, grow, and play multiple attacking positions. She has the hunger to improve, is a great teammate, has fun on the court, and her positive attitude is infectious. She will continue to play at Southwest Volleyball Club and is embracing the opportunity to improve and grow as she prepares to compete at the next level. I am excited to welcome her to SMC Volleyball."

Ava and the Chieftains earned Academic All-State the past three years and Ava has earned High Honors all four years.

"Ava brings a fun and energizing spirit to any team she is on," added Dowagiac Coach Amber Todd. "Her authenticity is matched by her impressive growth in volleyball, which she has developed in a very short time. I am excited to see her success playing at the next level."

Zache, a libero, helped lead the Vikings to two District Championships in 2024 and 2025, was the top defensive player on the team.

"I am thrilled to welcome Maddie Zache to the SMC Volleyball Team," Nate said. " Maddie is a hard worker, positive force, amazing athlete, and outstanding scholar. Maddie has incredible court awareness, reads the opposing hitters, and brings positive energy to the court, classroom, and community. Maddie is the epitome of the kinds of players we look for to help us continue to build a positive, winning culture here at SMC."

Zache also played club volleyball at Blue Volleyball Academy last year.

"Maddie's energy and intensity is one of a kind," added Niles Head Coach Abbie Harpenau. "Her hard work and dedication are inspiring to others. Anyone who gets her to be a part of their team is blessed."

Photo provided

The SMC menn's basketball team earned a 96-66 win over the Kuyper JV team Friday, Nov. 14.

SMC men's hoops splits games with Kuyper JV, Elgin CC

SMC ATHLETICS

DOWAGIAC — The Southwestern Michigan College men's basketball team split its games last week, defeating Kuyper JV at home after suffering a loss on the road to Elgin Community College.

The Roadrunners closed the week with a 96-66 victory over the visiting Kuyper JV Cougars on Friday, Nov. 14 in the 1st Source Bank Fieldhouse. Sophomore Davion Goins led the team with a double-double, recording 27 points and 10 rebounds. Freshman Jovohn Ratliff and sophomore Anthony Brady each contributed 17 points. Sophomore guard Damontae May, who was recently named Western Conference Player of the Week, added 13 points on 75 percent shooting from the field.

On Tuesday, Nov. 11, SMC traveled to Illinois and was defeated by Elgin Community College 100-83. The Spartans pulled away early after getting hot from the three-point line. Ratliff led the Roadrunners with 20 points, Goins added 14 points, and freshmen Deuce Weston and Jaylen Ingram each scored 13 points.

The team will travel north to Muskegon to play the Jayhawks Saturday.

Moore named finalist for Nagurski Trophy

NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Sophomore cornerback Leonard Moore has been named a finalist for the 2025 Bronko Nagurski Trophy, which honors college football's top defensive player.

Moore is the fifth Notre Dame finalist for the Nagurski Trophy in program history, joining safety Xavier Watts (2023), linebacker Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah (2020), linebacker Manti Te'o (2012) and cornerback Shane Walton (2002). Watts and Te'o are Notre Dame's two previous winners of the Nagurski Trophy.

Moore is also a semifinalist for the 2025 Chuck Bednarik Award, also honoring the top defensive player in college football, the 2025 Lott IMPACT Trophy, which recognizes the nation's top defensive player who makes an impact on and off the field, and the 2025 Paycom Jim Thorpe Award, which honors college football's top defensive back.

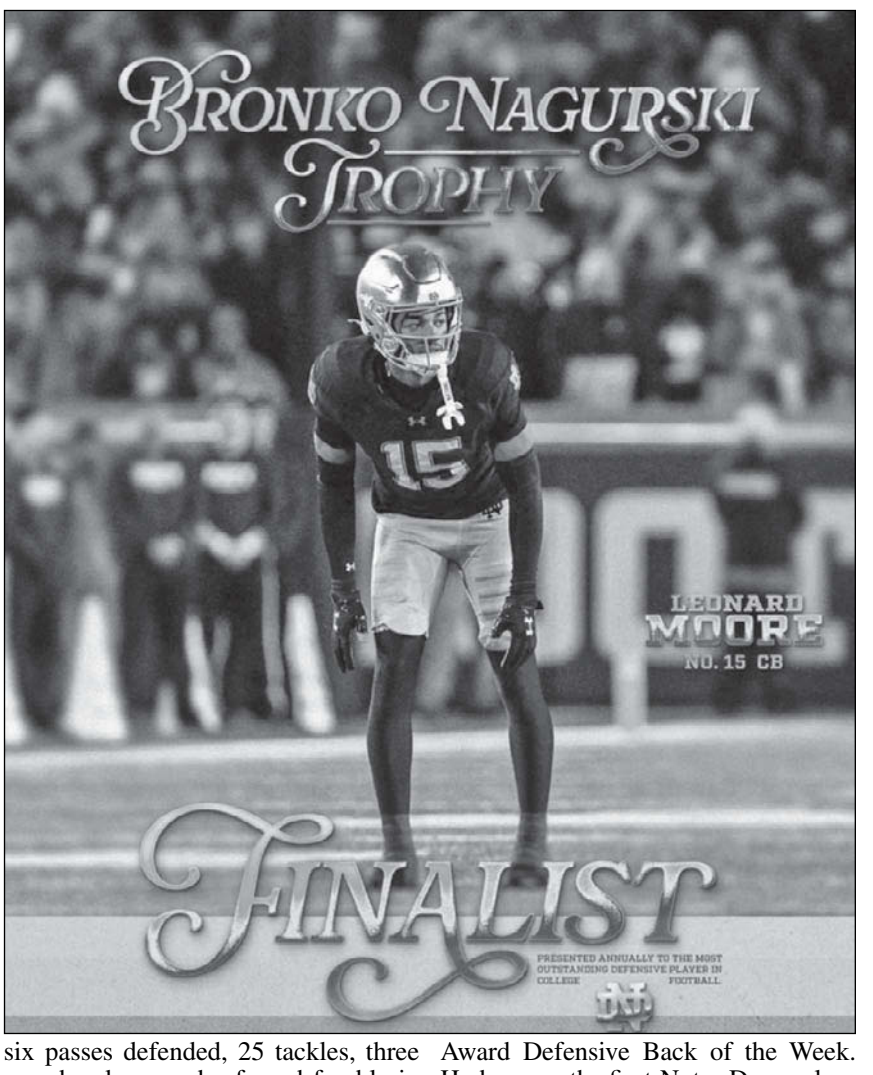
Moore has made a statement thus far in the 2025 season, earning seven midseason first-team All-America honors, including by The Associated Press, The Sporting News, CBS Sports, The Athletic, Sports Illustrated, Pro Football Focus and Athlon Sports.

Because of his lockdown abilities, Moore has only been targeted by opposing quarterbacks on 10.6 percent of passing plays in which he was on the field. For every reception he has allowed this season, he has posted 14.4 coverage snaps.

In just eight games played this season, Moore has posted three interceptions. Moore is the only cornerback in the nation to rank in the Top 10 in both INT rate allowed and first-down rate allowed. Among starting Power 4 cornerbacks, Moore ranks second in INT rate (nine percent), fourth in Pro Football Focus coverage grade and defense grade (88.8 and 86.8) and 10th in first-down rate (10 percent).

Moore, in addition to his three interceptions this season, has posted six passes defended, 25 tackles, three pass breakups and a forced fumble in just eight games played. With Moore's help, Notre Dame ranks third in the nation in total interceptions (17), 10th in turnover margin (0.90), 13th in rushing defense (99.3), 15th in sacks (2.80), 17th in scoring defense (18.4) and 19th in team passing efficiency defense (112.76).

Two of Moore's interceptions came in the same game vs. Boise State, a career-best performance. For his performance that week, he was named the Walter Camp FBS Defensive Player of the Week and the Paycom Jim Thorpe Award Defensive Back of the Week. He became the first Notre Dame player to have multiple interceptions in the same game since 2023 (Xavier Watts). The 2024 FWAA Freshman Defensive Player of the Year, Moore entered the 2025 season with several accolades, as he was named to the Preseason All-America First Team lists by Walter Camp, The Sporting News, the Associated Press, The Athletic, ESPN, CBS Sports, Athlon Sports and Phil Steele. He has also been named to patch lists for the Bronko Nagurski Trophy, Paycom Jim Thorpe Award, Chuck Bednarik Award and Lott IMPACT Trophy.



IRISH

From page B2

Sophomore guard Cole Certa got into double figures for the second time this season with 12 points on 2-5 shooting from three and a perfect 6-6 from the free throw line.

Notre Dame has now scored at least 78 points in all four home games, shooting 51.5 percent inside Purcell.

How it happened

After making their first two shots to open the game, Bellarmine was held scoreless for the next three minutes as a Carson Towt finish and a Markus Burton trey would put Notre Dame in front 7-4 at the first media timeout.

Later tied at 14-all, only two players on each team had tallied points. Burton was already in double figures with 10 by 12:23 while Towt had four. Cole Certa broke the trend at 10:50 when his triple kicked off a solo 5-0 run to go up 19-16.

However, turnovers plagued the Irish during a long stretch in the first half, committing seven with 5:46 remaining till half, resulting in a 21-26 deficit. That's when the Irish found another gear to end the half.

Notre Dame ended the first half on a 16-4 scoring spree to go up 37-30 at the midway point. Haralson scored eight points during this run, while Burton supplied six to bring his halftime total to a game high 16. Towt had eight points and nine rebounds at the break.

All-in-all, Notre Dame missed just three shots in the final 7:30 of the first half to finish 15-25 (.600). They also only committed one turnover during that final six minute scoring spree to finish with eight. Meanwhile, Bellarmine shot 10-22 (.455) in the half and were led by Jack Karasinski's 12 points.

A Certa triple, plus buckets from Haralson, Towt and Burton extended the run to 25-5 to start the second half, going up 46-31 at 16:50. Defensively, the Irish forced three Bellarmine turnovers off the rip to start the half. By the 15:27 media timeout, the Notre Dame defense had limited the Knights to three second-half points.

Later, Logan Imes had the hot hand with six consecutive points from 12:56-10:43 to push the Irish ahead by 20 at 62-42.

Shrewsberry's second triple of the night would make it a 68-42 ballgame, giving Notre Dame their largest lead of the night at 22 heading into the 7:16 media timeout.

Bellarmine wouldn't go down without a fight though. After recording an impressive 9-9 stretch from the field (four of which were triples), the Knights pulled within seven at 79-72 with 1:30 remaining.

A pair of Towt free throws would extend the Irish lead back to nine at 81-72 with 1:28 remaining.

A Shrewsberry free throw was followed by a pair of Bellarmine free throws to make it a five-point ballgame, but Burton's final two free throws would cap off the battle from the foul line as the Irish took home the win 86-79.

A big challenge awaits as the Fighting Irish jet west for the 2025 Players Era Championship. The top teams in the country will converge on Las Vegas for Feast Week.

Up first on Monday, Nov. 24, is blueblood Kansas. The very next day, the Irish will look to enact some revenge on Rutgers from last year's Players Era. Both games will be on TNT. The third game/opponent will be decided based on results.

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ORDER REGARDING ALTERNATE SERVICE

U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, as Trustee, as successor-in-interest to U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely as indenture trustee, for the holders of CIM Trust 2021-R1, Mortgage-Backed Notes, Series 2021-R1. c/o Plaintiff's attorney
Plaintiff(s).

V.

Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins.
Defendant(s).

THE COURT FINDS:
Service of process upon the defendant, Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins cannot reasonably be made as provided in MCR 2.105, and service of process may be made in a manner that is reasonably calculated to give the defendant actual notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard.
IT IS ORDERED:
Service of the summons and complaint and a copy of this order shall be made by the following method(s).: First class mail to 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Tracking or firmly affixing to the door at 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Publishing for three consecutive weeks in the Cass County Legal News pursuant to MCR 2.106(D) and via certified mail return receipt requested to the last known address of: 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. For each method used, proof of service must be filed promptly with the court.

/s/ Judge Mark A. Herman (P34735) 10/23/2025
Filed 10/23/2025 Monica McMichael Cass County Clerk

STATE OF MICHIGAN
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
NOTICE OF HEARING
FOR THE ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS OF
INDIANA MICHIGAN POWER COMPANY
CASE NO. U-21986

· Indiana Michigan Power Company requests Michigan Public Service Commission for approval of modifications to its Large Power Tariff – Tariff LP.

· The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.

· You may call or write Indiana Michigan Power Company, Benton Harbor Service Center, 2425 Meadowbrook Rd., Benton Harbor, MI 49022, (800) 311-6424, for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the documents at the offices of Indiana Michigan Power Company or on the Commission's website at: https://mi-psc.my.site.com/s/.

· A pre-hearing will be held:

DATE/TIME: Friday, December 19, 2025 at 9:00 AM

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Christopher S. Saunders

LOCATION: Video/Teleconference

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may participate. Persons needing any assistance to participate or who are seeking access to the video/teleconference should contact the Administrative Law Judge's secretary at (517) 284-8130 or by email at LARA-MOAHR-PSC@michigan.gov in advance of the hearing.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a pre-hearing to consider Indiana Michigan Power Company's (I&M) October 17, 2025 application requesting the Commission to: 1) authorize and approve the requested modifications to I&M Large Power Tariff – Tariff LP, also referred to as "Large Load Terms and Conditions of Service," which include: (a) a contract term for an initial period of fifteen years plus a 5 year load ramp period and provisions to address assignment of rights or delegations of obligations under the Contract; (b) an Exit Fee that would apply if the customer: (i) permanently closes, (ii) elects to take service form a qualified Alternate Electric Supplier (AES), or (iii) reduces contract capacity more than 20%; (c) provisions that allow a customer to reduce its contract capacity by up to twenty (20) percent during the contract term with a 60 months prior notice; (d) a 90% monthly minimum billing demand and a 65% monthly minimum energy; (e) provisions related to temporary service requests and interconnection study costs; and (f) an increased minimum amount of collateral to be provided by the customer; 2) authorize and approve the requested modifications to become effective upon issuance of the Commission's order on the merits in this Case; and 3) grant I&M such other and further relief as is just and reasonable.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: https://mi-psc.my.site.com/s/. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 284-8090 or by email at: mpscedockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by December 12, 2025. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Indiana Michigan Power Company's attorney, Jason T. Hanselman, 201 Townsend St., Ste. 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

The prehearing is scheduled to be held remotely by video conference or teleconference. Persons filing a petition to intervene will be advised of the process for participating in the hearing.

Any person wishing to appear at the hearing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of their wish to make a statement of position. Mich Admin Code, R 792.10413 (Rule 413).

Any person wishing to file a public comment may do so by filing a written statement in this docket. The written statement may be mailed or emailed and should reference Case No. U-21986. Statements may be emailed to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. Statements may be mailed to: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, 7109 West Saginaw Hwy., Lansing, MI 48917.

All information submitted to the Commission in this matter becomes public information, thus available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure. Please do not include information you wish to remain private. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Executive Secretary at the above address or by telephone at (517) 284-8090.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules R 792.10422 and R 792.10432. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 284-8130.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; and Parts 1 & 4 of the Administrative Hearing Rules of the Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules, Mich. Admin Code, R 792.10106(2), (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7); R 792.10121; and R 792.10401 through R 792.10448.

U-21986

Howard Charter Township – Summary of Ordinance No. 235
Ordinance No. 235 will regulate short-term rentals (under 28 days) of single-family dwellings in Howard Charter Township. It will require annual registration, owner or local agent contact, proof of $1 million liability insurance, compliance with occupancy, parking, quiet hours, and safety standards, and prohibit partial-home rentals, street parking, special events, fireworks, and use of attics or basements as bedrooms. Violations will result in civil fines, suspension, or revocation of registration. The ordinance will take effect 30 days after publication. After 30 days the full text of the ordinance will be on the township website. Full text available from the Township Clerk, 1345 Barron Lake Rd., Niles, MI 49120.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

RE: THE EDWARD D. AND PATRICIA A. KLAEREN (NOW IRREVOCABLE) TRUST DATED April 12, 2005

SURVIVING SETTLOR: PATRICIA A. KLAEREN
DATE OF DEATH: MAY 2, 2025
DATE OF BIRTH: OCTOBER 1, 1940
EIN# 39-7079829

SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE: TERRIANNE KLAEREN

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Settlor of the above trust, PATRICIA A. KLAEREN, died May 2, 2025; she resided at 415 Remus Drive, Buchanan, MI 49107. in the City of Buchanan, Berrien County, Michigan. Creditors of PATRICIA A. KLAEREN, Deceased and the above trust are notified that all claims against PATRICIA A. KLAEREN, individually and the above trust will be forever barred unless presented to Terrianne Klaeren, Successor Trustee of the Trust, or to Attorney James J. Mollison, whose respective addresses are listed below, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice. No probate estate is necessary nor anticipated.

Date: November 22, 2025

James J. Mollison [P17884]
Attorney for Trustee
4 South Lincoln Avenue
Niles, MI 49120
269-684-7600
C 269-930-4170

Terrianne Klaeren, Successor Trustee
1009 Almaugus Drive
Niles, MI 49120
708-439-1380

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on December 10, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information: Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Stanley William Davis, a married man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): PennyMac Loan Services LLC Date of Mortgage: July 23, 2004 Date of Mortgage Recording: July 29, 2004 Amount claimed due on date of notice: $56,079.43 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in City of Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Lot(s) 2 of BURMAX PARK, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Liber 1-E of Plats, Page(s) 271 of Cass County Records. Common street address (if any): 27919 Burmax Park, Dowagiac, MI 49047-9644 The redemption period shall be 1 year from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.

This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: November 8, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145, Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1576401 (11-08)(11-29)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Timothy Grigalanz and Faustina Lynn Grigalanz, Husband and Wife Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., solely as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans Foreclosing Assignee: Planet Home Lending, LLC Date of Mortgage: March 20, 2024 Date of Mortgage Recording: March 22, 2024 Amount claimed due on mortgage on the date of notice: $255,187.48 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in the Township of Ontwa, Cass County, Michigan, and are described as: That part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, which is described as beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East, along the North 1/8th line of said Section 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20"East, 661.22 feet; thence. South 89°56'30" West 662.53 feet to the West line of said Section; thence, North along said line 661.37 feet to the point of beginning. EXCEPT, that part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, which is described as: Beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section 14; thence North 89°57'15"East along the North 1/8th line of said Section, 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East, 300.00 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West, 662.18 feet; thence North 300.00 feet to the point of beginning. ALSO EXCEPTING, That part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Township 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, described as: Beginning at a point on the West line ' of said Section 14, a distance of 1622.74 feet South of the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East 662.18 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East 361.23 feet; thence South 89°56'30" West 379.00 feet; thence North O°O3'2O" East 276.23 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West 283.80 feet to the West line of said Section 14; thence North on said Section line 85.08 feet to the point of beginning. Commonly Known as: 70335 Martin Rd., Edwardsburg, MI 49112 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or upon the expiration of the notice required by MCL 600.3241a(c), whichever is later; or unless MCL 600.3240(16) applies. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Purchaser: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee for any reason. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest, and the purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee, or the Mortgagee's attorney. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. This notice is from a debt collector. Date of notice: 11/22/2025 Potestivo & Associates, P.C. 251 Diversion Street, Rochester, MI 48307 248-853-4400 321574 (11-22)(12-13)

Howard Township Cass County, Michigan
Board of Trustees November 18, 2025
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.
Board Action
Approved Meeting Agenda.
Approved the minutes of the 10/21/25 Board Meeting
Approved the financial report with an ending balance of 1,550,475.89 including a CD
Approved the payment of bills through November 18, 2025
Approved the departmental reports
Approved Ordinance 235 Short Term Rentals
Approved Resolution 2025-008 Schedule of Fees
Approved Holiday closures for Dec 24-26 and Dec 31- Jan 2
Public Comment occurred
Adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Case No. 24-000609-CH Circuit Court Sale In pursuance and by virtue of an Order Granting Motion for Default Judgment and for Judicial Foreclosure as to All Defendants in the Circuit Court for the County of Cass, State of Michigan, made and entered on the 4th of August, A.D., 2025 in a certain cause therein pending, wherein CitiMortgage, Inc. was the Plaintiff and Any and all heirs, Assignees and Devisees of Esther A. Gogley and Rosalie Simpson were the Defendants. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I shall sell at public auction to the highest bidder, at public vendue, at the Cass County Courthouse (that being the place of holding the Circuit Court for said County), on the 14th of January, A.D., 2026 at 10:00 o`clock in the forenoon, Eastern Standard Time, the following described property, viz: A certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Penn, County of Cass, State of Michigan: LOT NUMBER TEN (10), IN THE VILLAGE OF JAMESTOWN, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDED PLAT THEREOF. 14-100-100-010-00 c/k/a: 19125 Quaker St, Cassopolis, MI 49031 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale. Clint Roach, Deputy Sheriff _/s/ Melissa Z. Prantzalos Melissa Z. Prantzalos of Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. Attorney for CitiMortgage, Inc. Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 1576877 (11-15)(12-20)

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday September 27, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Unit # Name
10 Charmin Kelly
22 Amber Bedenfield
28 Emalee Anderson
56 Nathan Thomas
57 Caleb Dubik
67 Jerome Jankowiak
77 Stoney Tittle
82 Ericka Pitone
94 Joshua Thompson
116 Melissa Kaeding
125/179 Steve Kelley
127/633 Chris Norris
145/467/468 Michael Merritt
168 Gene Robertson
173 George Tovey III
177 Larry Wegrecki
183 Cindy Fisher
184/66 Mary Anderson
191 Alan Smith
192 Patricia Yoder
195 Daniel Beushauser
196 Colton Wedgworth
205 Nancy Bombrys
228/367 Shawnette Booker
272 Kurt Shepard
273 Tony Pompey
278 Chelsie Carlyle
284 Kathleen Peters
321 James Browning
330 Sheila Kollars
342 Terrence Moss
346 DaMonica Williams
351 Lyman Bybie
379 Bobbie Helms
389 Parnell Jenkins
399 Les Hart
403 Xavier Williams
410/534 Rebecca Coleman
427 McCade Reese
429 Aaron Haynes
432 Mare Williams
449 Ronald Schmal
451 Jean Fitch
513 Justin Scott
677/567 Julie Potate
530 Justin Landis
518 Dawn Lintz
541 Nicole Hurt
545 Candy Whitmire
577 Stephanie Pellow
605 Michael Lewark
613 Nicole Jones
616 Nathaniel Sherres
638 Britney Stanczyk
660 Steve Sharrai
665 Rodney Prescott

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI49120. Auction Saturday September 27, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.

23 Miranda Wendzel **54** Cynthia Swisher **57** Nathan Haynes

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday September 27, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

59 Shara Brody
389 Llandon Ross
423 Tianne Double
426 James Schilling Jr.
428 Brian Walls
452 Aaron Smith
481 Natosha Libertowski
496 Nicole Brugh
521 Paul Mowrey
97 Blake King
126A John Daniel
200A Mike Nidiffer
311A Michael Tapia
379 Amanda McCombs
373 Rhonda Sue Outlaw
372 Albert Felder
346 Joe Jones
292 The Woodshed Crafts
250 Robert Clayton/Jessica Vissik
238/466 James Diss
230 Felisha Liberty
206 Larry Morbach
227 Jennifer Nichols
168 Jerol Williams Jr.
140 Ronnie West

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on DECEMBER 3, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Jerry L. Parker and Theresa Hart, husband and wife, to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan), Mortgagee, dated March 13, 2009, and recorded April 24, 2009, in Liber 993, Page 913 Cass County Records, Michigan. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Forty-Six Thousand One Hundred Eight and 89/100 Dollars ($146,108.89).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on DECEMBER 3, 2025.
Said premises are located in the City of Jones, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
PART OF THE WEST HALF OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 35, TOWN 6 SOUTH, RANGE 13 WEST, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE WEST HALF OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION 35; THENCE WEST ALONG THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID SECTION, 463.86 FEET; THENCE NORTH 12°08' EAST, 152.05 FEET; THENCE NORTH 77°52' WEST, 30.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH 12°08' EAST, 361.29 FEET; THENCE NORTH 65°29' WEST, 296.92 FEET TO THE CENTER LINE OF STATE HIGHWAY M-40; THENCE NORTH 12°08' EAST, ALONG SAID CENTERLINE, 428.88 FEET; THENCE ALONG SAID CENTERLINE ON A CURVE TO THE LEFT, 510.20 FEET TO A POINT 44.00 FEET SOUTHERLY ALONG SAID CENTERLINE FROM THE NORTHERLY LINE OF THE MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD (NOW ABANDONED); THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY TO A POINT ON THE EAST LINE OF THE WEST HALF OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION WHICH IS NORTH 0°39' WEST, 1455.50 FEET FROM THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID WEST HALF; THENCE SOUTH 0°39' EAST ALONG SAID EAST LINE 1455.50 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.
61893 M 40, Jones, Michigan 49061
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: November 1, 2025

File No. 25-013121
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400
(11-01)(11-22)

0500 MERCHANDISE

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Niles, MI 49120

Tues.-Sat. 10am-6pm

0600 REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

Needed Year Round Storage In Niles Area For Car, Motorcycle And Other Garage Items Call: 574-361-2535

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF Cass

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE AND CREDITORS NOTICE

FILE NO.
2025-293-DE

ESTATE OF: Herman H. Arnold, **Deceased**
Date of Birth: April 05, 1953

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including creditors and heirs of the deceased whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

Be advised that a Petition for Determination of Heirs has been filed with the Court and a hearing on said Petition will be held on **December 2, 2025, at 9:00 A.M.**, at the Cass County Court House, 60296 M62, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Decedent, Herman Arnold, who lived at 69272 Ironwood Drive, Niles, Michigan, died May 16, 2025.

Creditors of the Decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Rudy Arnold, named personal representative, or to the probate court at 60296 M62, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031 and the named personal representative within four (4) months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date November 22, 2025

Robert L. Landgraf, Jr. (P23000)
Attorney
Post Office Box 1310
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269)683-8300

Rudy Arnold
Petitioner
321 Lakeview Drive
Osteen, FL 32764

Penn Township Zoning Board of Appeals will meet on December 9th, 2025, at 6:30 pm, at Penn Township Hall, 60717 Main Street, Vandalia, MI 49095 to review a request by homeowner for a variance for a rebuild of family residence at 17480 Donnell Lake Street, Vandalia, Michigan 49095. Particularly, the homeowner is seeking a side yard setback adjustment from local ordinance.

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-109-DE
JUDGE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Estate of:
Michael Allen Luttrell
Date of birth: 03/05/1960

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Michael Allen Luttrell, died 09/17/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Deborah Sarah Martin, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62 St. 10, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 11/13/2025

Stephen K. Woods P54528
Attorney name Bar no.
156 South Broadway
Address
Cassopolis, MI 49031
City, state, zip
269-445-2658
Telephone

Sarah Martin
Personal representative
71417 Melvin Road
Address
Edwardsburg, MI 49112
City, state, zip
269-340-2850
Telephone

City of Dowagiac Seeking Bids for Lawn Maintenance Services

The City of Dowagiac is seeking bids for Lawn Maintenance Services. The RFP covers a 5-year term (2026-2030) and includes lawn areas both in the downtown area as well as the outlying parks and Riverside Cemetery. A summary of all existing sites is contained within the RFP and a link to a GIS map providing a detailed over-view of the lawn areas to be mowed is included as well. Interested bidders can find the Request for Proposals (RFP) containing all of the site/facility details and requirements on the City website under Current Projects/Bids on the Public Services page or by visiting the following link: https://tinyurl.com/2bnmfffr. An RFP can also be requested via email to dpsdirector@dowagiac.org. Proposals will be accepted through December 3rd at 3:00pm

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43rd JUDICIAL CIRCUIT - FAMILY DIVISION
CASS COUNTY

PUBLICATION OF HEARING

CASE NO. 2500084
PETITION NO. 25-147-NA

TO: Nikalas Wogatzke
ADDRESS UNKNOWN

IN THE MATTER OF: I.W

A hearing regarding Adjudication will be conducted by the court on December 16, 2025, at 1:30pm In Cass County Family Court, Hearing Room #18, 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, Michigan before Referee Leigh Feldman (P61475). You have the right to an attorney and the right to a trial by judge or jury.
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that NIKALAS WOGATZKE personally appear before the court at the time and place stated above. This hearing may result in the Court taking jurisdiction over your child.

NOTICE TO FORMER CLIENTS
The Law Office of Attorneys James K. Jesse and Jeanette M. Jesse has closed. Files from closed client matters are currently being reviewed . If you were previously a client of James K. Jesse or Jeanette M. Jesse and wish to retrieve your file, please contact Attorney Jeanette M. Jesse at 269-921-9131 or jeanettejesse22@gmail.com to arrange a time for pick-up. Files not claimed by December 31, 2025 will be subject to disposal.

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Penn Township Board of Review will meet on: Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 5pm at the Township Hall 60717 Main St, Vandalia, Michigan. The purpose of this meeting is to correct qualified errors. NO VALUATION APPEALS CAN BE HEARD.
The July and December Boards of Review have different authorities than the March Board of Review. The July and December Boards of Review meet to correct Qualified Errors, and to consider appeals related to the Principal Residence Exemption, Qualified Agricultural Exemption, Taxable Value Uncapping, the Qualified Start-up Business Exemption, and Poverty Exemptions.
Contact Information:
Don Jollay, MAAO
(815)546-8288
PennAssessor@gmail.com
P.O. Box 69
Vandalia, MI 49095

0900 LEGALS

Synopsis of the Minutes of the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees Monday, November 10, 2025

The regular meeting of the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees was called to order at 6:00pm.
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call
Approval of the Agenda
Public Comment
Approval of Consent Agenda
Commissioner's Report: Commissioner Marchetti
Committee Board Reports: No reports this month
Old Business: Elkhart Road Project
New Business: Wastewater Semco Energy, Wastewater CT Electric, 711115 M62 Board Approval
Schedule of Township meetings: Township Board Meeting will be December 8th, Ambulance Board Meeting November 12th, Police Board Meeting November 13th, Planning Commission Meeting December 3rd, Wastewater Board Meeting November 26th
Meeting Adjourned 6:26 pm
Minutes of Board of Trustee meetings may be found on the Twp **website:**www.ontwatwp.org
Respectfully submitted by Tina VanBelle, Ontwa Township Clerk
Approved for Publication by Supervisor Meryl Christensen

PUBLIC NOTICE
Jefferson Township Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Synopsis, November 13, 2025
Supervisor Hass called the November 13, 2025, meeting to order at 6:30 PM with board members present: Brunner, Gillam, Hass, Mendenhall.
Absent: Bundle.
REGULAR MEETING BOARD ACTION
- October 9, 2025, meeting minutes were approved.
- Treasurer's Report was given.
- Payment of bills was authorized.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Brunner, Clerk

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OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Take a chance on a hike

Unwise decisions can lead to unforgettable moments

Photos by Ryan Yuenger / HP Correspondent

Sunlight illuminates a snow-covered sand dune and colorful Fall leaves cling to trees as an impending snow squall threatens the Lake Michigan shoreline at Grand Mere State Park.

Moonlight from a full moon creates a rainbow in the mist of Cumberland Falls in Corbin, Ky. on Nov. 4.

Fall colors contrast with fresh snow on top of a dune at Grand Mere State Park in Stevensville on Nov. 10.

Sun shines on a snow-covered sand dune at Grand Mere as another snow squall forms just offshore.

Ryan Yuenger

At face value, taking a chance on a hike might sound like dangerous advice.

One wrong step and you're tumbling down the side of a dune with nothing to break your fall but a backpack, gallons of sand and the business end of a dogwood bush.

Ask me how I know.

I don't mean take a chance with your *safety* on a hike, I mean take a chance by saying "yes" to an impractical, borderline unwise decision to go for a hike if you think the reward might be worth the risk. With this mindset, I was rewarded twice already this month – once deep in the woods of Appalachia and another time after a freak fall snowstorm here at home.

Cumberland Falls moonbow

I first discovered the natural wonder of Cumberland Falls in 2014 while making the 15-hour drive down to Hulaween – a hallowe-en-themed music and arts festival at the Spirit of the Suwanee Music Park in north central Florida.

A friend and I needed a place to camp for the night on our way to the festival, and randomly stopped at a campground in Kentucky's Cumberland Falls State Park.

We didn't know it at the time, but the night we arrived at the campground, a rare event was happening just down the road – the Cumberland Falls moonbow.

When the conditions are just right during a full moon at Cumberland Falls, the moonlight can illuminate the 68-foot-tall, 125-foot-wide waterfall to reveal a moonbow, or lunar rainbow, in the mist at the base of the waterfall. The Cumberland Falls moonbow is said to be the only such predictable moonbow in the western world.

Even without witnessing the rare event back in 2014, the power of the waterfall and surrounding rocky river gorge left an impression on my wandering soul. Every time I travel south on I-75, I make a point to stop at Cumberland Falls with hopes of catching a glimpse of the elusive natural wonder.

On my way to Hulaween this year, heavy rains marred my attempt to visit the waterfall. Then after five days of camping, merrymaking and late-night howling at the moon in the woods of Florida, I thought I might be too tired for a side quest while trying to make it back home for work on Wednesday.

I stopped at a hotel in Knoxville Monday night, and by Tuesday morning I was still too tired to get past the Tennessee-Kentucky border, so I napped another five hours at the Kentucky welcome center.

Upon waking, I checked the weather and saw there was going to be a supermoon – a brighter-than-usual full moon – that night. As luck would have it, I was only 20 miles from Cumberland Falls. At the very least, I figured could get down to the falls for a brief sunset hike and possibly wait for a moonbow.

When I arrived, dozens of people were already at the falls, set up with camping chairs waiting for the cosmic event. At 5:30 p.m., I overheard a couple saying the moonbow would begin at 7:30 p.m.

I was torn. I'd spent so much energy wanting and trying to see this moonbow over the years, but I still had seven hours of driving ahead of me.

The smart thing to do was hit the road and get home in time for bed. Instead, a little John Muir-shaped devil popped up on my shoulder and asked "Have you ever seen the moon shoot a rainbow out of a waterfall? Would you like to?"

The answer to his second question was a resounding "yes," of course.

With crowds gathering at the lower viewing platform, the full moon slowly illuminated the waterfall. As the light trickled down the water and into the mist, the outline of a rainbow formed before our eyes. By 7:45 p.m., the lunar rainbow was shining from the base of the falls and into the river.

I took several deep breaths to appreciate this special moment before getting back in the car and racing the morning sun back home.

Fall winter storm

That weekend, Southwest Michigan was hit with our first major "winter" storm. More than a foot of snow fell in some areas by Monday afternoon, and since Paxton Media Group newspapers were not publishing on Veteran's Day, I had the day off work.

Seizing the opportunity to take another chance, I grabbed my camera and set off for Grand Mere State Park to try and experience another rare scene – peak fall colors contrasting with piles of glistening white powder.

By the time I was knee deep in snow climbing the back side of the dune, I questioned my decision to take a chance on this hike. Snow was pouring into my boots and my hands were starting to freeze in my gloves, but I continued up the dune.

No sense turning back when I'm almost to the peak.

Atop the dune, I basked in the radiant warmth of the sun as it reflected off piles of snow blanketing the dune-scape. Lake Michigan roared with approval as the untouched snow sparkled with every beam of light, creating a wonderful scene with fall colors in the trees, blue skies to the southwest and a dark impending snow squall just offshore.

With wind picking up and the snow in my boots turning to water, I knew it was time to head back to the warmth of my car. As I descended, the snow squall arrived and I thought to myself "this was probably a bad idea, but I'm glad I took the chance."

Taking a chance on a hike means much more than just saying yes to an adventure – it's about saying yes to myself. By taking a chance on myself, I can instill belief that every decision I make is the correct one – even if it's slightly insane.

When rewarded by rare natural events like I have been lately, its hard not to believe there's something profound about this way of living.

Ryan Yuenger is an HP correspondent. Send him ideas of where to take a hike or have his next outdoor adventure at ryuenger@thehp.com.

Seal escapes orca hunt by jumping onto boat

By CEDAR ATTANASIO
Associated Press

SEATTLE — A wildlife photographer out on a whale watching trip in waters off Seattle captured dramatic video and photos of a pod of killer whales hunting a seal that survived only by clambering onto the stern of her boat.

Charvet Drucker was on a rented 20-foot (6-meter) boat near her home on an island in the Salish Sea about 40 miles northwest of Seattle when she spotted a pod of at least eight killer whales, also known as orcas.

The orcas' coordinated movements and tail slaps suggested they were hunting. Drucker used the zoom lens on her camera to spot a harbor seal that was trying to flee from the pod. One of her shots showed the seal flying through the air above the scrum of orcas frothing the water, and she assumed she was witnessing the seal's last moments alive.

But as the orcas got closer to the boat, Drucker and her group realized the pod was still chasing the seal. In line with wildlife boating regulations, they had cut the engine to prevent any injury to the whales. The seal clambered out of the water and onto a swimming platform at the stern of the boat near the motor – claiming it as a life raft of sorts. Wildlife regulations also prohibit touching or interfering with the seal, but Drucker began filming video.

"You poor thing," Drucker can be heard saying, as the seal looks up at her. "You're good, just stay, buddy."

The orcas did not give up immediately, but instead appeared to team up to rock the boat and make the seal fall off. Drucker's cellphone video shows the orcas lining up and moving in on the boat with staggered dives to create waves. The "wave-washing" technique has been documented since by scientists since at least the 1980s, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The seal on Drucker's boat slid off at least once, but managed to climb back on, and the orcas swam away after about 15 minutes.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds

for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Hunters Feeding Michigan

Deer donation drives: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday at Clear Water Meats in Eau Claire. Help fight hunger and ensure Michiganders have access to a nutritious protein source when they need it the most by taking part in Hunters Feeding Michigan deer donation drives. All deer must be whole (with head attached), legally harvested/tagged, harvest-reported and field-dressed prior to donation. All donated venison will be distributed to Michigan food pantries.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

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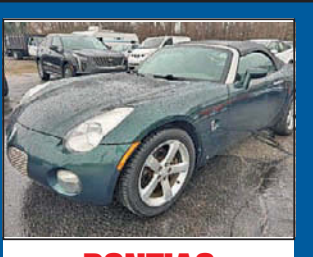

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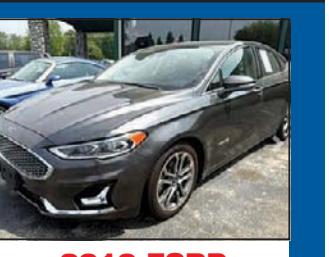

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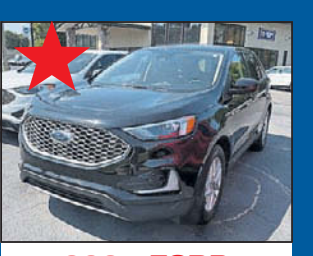

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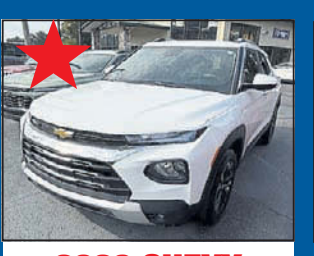

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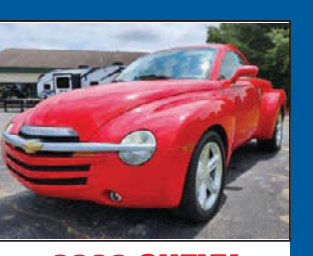

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